

# SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF PRACTICAL INFORMATION, ART, SCIENCE, MECHANICS, CHEMISTRY, AND MANUFACTURES.

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[NEW SERIES.]

NEW YORK, AUGUST 23, 1879

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## NEW MERIDIAN CIRCLE.

Although telescopes of great size have for some time been manufactured in this country, all large observatory instruments of precision have heretofore been imported from Europe. Three years ago the firm of Fauth & Co., of Washington, D. C., was established and commenced the manufacture of large instruments of precision, and such was their success that they now stand in the front rank of their profession. Our engraving illustrates the large meridian circle made by this firm for Princeton College. A glance at it will show the instrument is very compact and solid; the convenience of the observer has been studiously considered, without interfering with the accuracy of the instrument.

The principal feature of this instrument lies, of course, in the accuracy of its graduated circles, which have a diameter of 25 inches. They are divided into 5 minute spaces, and are read off by means of four micrometer microscopes, which instead of being fixed to the pier, can be moved any desired angular distance. This is especially useful in examining the graduation. The instrument throughout has the latest improvements. Objective and eyepieces can be interchanged; the bright field illumination can be changed instantly into the dark field with bright wires, the level, which indicates seconds of arc, can be read by means of a mirror. The piers upon which the telescope rests are cast hollow, in one piece, and the counterpoises are arranged within, as shown in the engraving. In use, however, the piers are covered with mahogany and lined with felt to prevent sudden changes of temperature affecting the instrument. For the purpose of reversing the telescope a reversing apparatus running on a railway is provided, which is not shown in cut, and it takes less than a minute to reverse the ponderous instrument, and it can be done with perfect ease.

We intend in coming issues to illustrate other instruments of precision made by the same firm. Messrs. Fauth & Co. manufacture all the instruments used by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. Among other matters of interest we expect to furnish our readers with a description of the graduating engine on which the circles of these instruments are divided with such marvelous accuracy.

## To Attain Long Life.

He who strives after a long and pleasant term of life must seek to attain continual equanimity, and carefully to avoid everything which too violently taxes his feelings. Nothing more quickly consumes the vigor of life than the violence of the emotions of the mind. We know that anxiety and care can destroy the healthiest body; we know that fright and fear, yes, excess of joy, become deadly. They who are naturally cool and of a quiet turn of mind, upon whom nothing can make too powerful an impression, who are not wont to be excited either by great sorrow or great joy, have the best chance of living long and happy after their manner. Preserve, therefore, under all circumstances, counsels *The Sanitarian*, a composure of mind which no happiness, no misfortune, can too much disturb. Love nothing too violently; hate nothing too passionately; fear nothing too strongly.

## American Institute Exhibition.

For forty-eight years the American Institute of New York has opened its doors and invited American inventors and manufacturers to exhibit their productions, and again this year it renews its invitation to all. To such as wish to reach the capitalist and consumer, they must admit that New York is the place. For details apply to the General Superintendent, by mail or otherwise.

## Huxley on Industrial Education.

If a lad in an elementary school showed signs of special capacity, I would try to provide him with the means of continuing his education after his daily working life had begun. If in the evening classes he developed special capabilities in the direction of science or of drawing, I would try to secure him an apprenticeship to some trade in which those powers would have applicability. Or, if he chose to become a teacher, he should have the chance of so doing. Finally, to the lad of genius, the one in a million, I would make accessible the highest and most complete training the country could afford. Whatever that might cost, depend upon it the investment would be a good one. I weigh my words when I say that, if the nation could purchase a potential Watt or Davy or Faraday, at the cost of a hundred thousand pounds

## Dephosphorizing Pig Iron—Utilization of Phosphorus.

Professor Wedding, in a paper contributed to a German publication, gives some data on the practical working of Krupp's, or rather Narjes', process for dephosphorizing pig iron. The originator of the process is Mr. Narjes, an engineer connected with Herr Krupp's works at Essen, who, on the 16th and 17th of March, 1877, worked the first heat on a large scale, four tons of pig, holding 0.7 per cent of phosphorus, being reduced to metal running 0.184 per cent, while the percentage of carbon sank only from 3.10 to 3.03 per cent. A patent was applied for and granted on the 2d of July, while Bell's provisional specification was drawn up on the 11th of April.

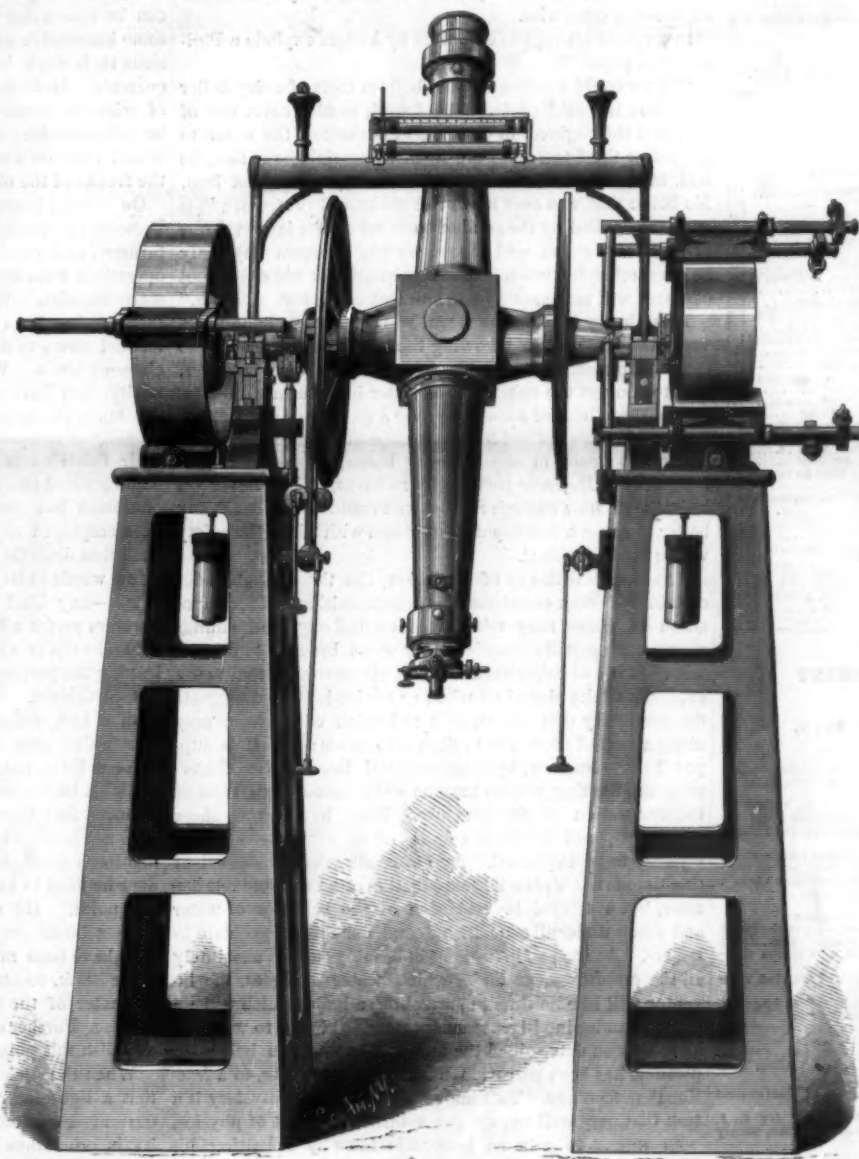
Narjes' process consists in dephosphorizing and refining the pig without affecting the carbon percentage materially, by oxides of iron and manganese partly used as fettling and partly by additions. The practice at Essen is said to be simple; the pig is melted in a 18 foot cupola with coke in one hour and a half, and then tapped into a furnace similar to the Pernot, heated by the regenerative system. The flat hearth is covered with a layer of almost one foot of iron melted at a very high temperature. Before every heat from 1,500 to 1,700 lb. of ore, also heated until sintered, are added. Another point which has not yet been settled is whether it will be possible, by adding a silicious pig, to fit the refined metal for the Bessemer process, for which, as at present constituted, it is not suitable, as the dephosphorizing process eliminates the silicon simultaneously.

Appropos to the above, the Boston *Journal of Commerce* adds that Mr. Sidney G. Thomas, one of the inventors of another famous dephosphorizing process, not content with having rendered phosphorus—that dreaded impurity of iron and steel—harmless, has gone one step further, and proposes the utilization of the phosphorus which in his process is, as it were, concentrated in the slag. He roasts the clinker obtained in blowing pig with simultaneous additions of lime and oxide of iron, in a reverberatory furnace, in order to convert the protoxides of iron and manganese into insoluble peroxides. After calcination the slag is ground fine, and is treated with cold hydrochloric or sulphuric acid, diluted, or with a cold solution of sulphurous acid, which dissolves the phosphoric acid. With the latter solvent the phosphate will be almost at once precipitated on heating, while the sulphurous acid, which is driven off, may be recovered by condensation. The solution in hydrochloric or sulphuric acid may be completely evaporated, forming a concentrated product which, when the former acid has been used, contains chloride of lime. These, or any other methods practiced for the manufacture of phosphates, may be

made use of. As few have an idea of the enormous quantities of phosphorus which are annually wasted in the manufacture of iron, it may be interesting to cite the fact that the phosphorus contained in the iron produced in the Cleveland district of England alone amounts to 30,000 tons. The recovery of phosphorus is not a novel idea, but it is possible that the concentration of phosphoric acid in the slag (7 to 15 per cent) may render it practically attainable.

## Carbon Photo Printing.

Mr. F. Gutekunst, 712 Arch street, Philadelphia, has organized a complete establishment for the printing of photographs by the carbon process, that is, in printer's ink that never fades. We have received some specimens of the work done, which are unsurpassed for excellence and reflect credit on the printer. For book illustration and portraiture this method of printing yields the finest results.



FAUTH & CO'S MERIDIAN CIRCLE.

down, he would be dirt-cheap at the money. It is a mere commonplace and every day piece of knowledge that what these three men did has produced untold millions of wealth in the narrowest economical sense of the word.—*The Sanitarian*.

## Photographic Patterns.

One of the silk manufacturing firms of Lyons, France, are introducing the production of photographic impressions on stuffs. They sent to a recent meeting of the Photographic Society several pieces of silk with a variety of photographic pictures printed thereon, including, among others, a number of large medallions representing pictures of the old masters. The length of the specimens thus exhibited is stated as being no less than 131 feet. The process by which they are produced is not given, but it is believed, says the *Commercial Bulletin*, that the prints are made with salts of silver.



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II. TECHNOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY.—The Preparation of Cottonseed Oil. White Bricks from Red Clays. Gelatin-Bromide Plates. By A. J. JARMAN. A method by which plates can be prepared at home, surely and easily. Reasons for Preferring Dry Plates to Wet Collodion. A cogent review of the advantages of the dry process, by a practical photographer. Coloring Matter of Santal and Callistura Wood. By N. FRANCHIMONT.
III. MEDICINE AND HYGIENE.—Southern California as a Health Resort. Yellow Fever. By ALFRED STILLE, M.D., LL.D. Earliest account of yellow fever. Its origin. Transatlantic epidemics. The disease has never originated outside of the West Indies. Conditions under which yellow fever is generated. Limited local origin of yellow fever established. Efficacy of rigid quarantine. Circumstances influencing the diffusion and fatality of yellow fever. Comparative immunity of the colored race. Essential cause of yellow fever unknown. Theory of germ origin not proved. Death not caused by uremia. Proofs of its non-contagiousness. Is an infectious disease? Rapidly of the diffusion of yellow fever poison. Effects of low temperature. Pathology of yellow fever. Explanation of black vomit. The liver in yellow fever. Forms of yellow fever. Symptoms of inflammatory yellow fever. Malignant type of the disease. Prognosis of yellow fever. Diagnosis. Treatment. No known specific for yellow fever. A Peculiar Form of Mania. The Identity of Tuberculous Corpuccles and Decolorized Blood Corpuccles. Evidence of the alleged identity. Communicated by ROLLIN R. GREGG, M.D.
IV. BIOLOGY.—The Beginnings of Life. III. By Prof. EDWARD PERLINS. (Continued from SUPPLEMENT No. 189). Beings intermediate between animals and plants. Fig. 1. Zoospores and antherozoids of cryptogams. Fig. 2. A plan of the finny of volvoxines. Fig. 3. Mago-spheres planula. Fig. 4. Myxozoa. Anthropometrical measurements. Physical comparisons of nineteen different peoples.
V. ETHNOLOGY AND GEOLOGY.—The Wisconsin Pictured Cave. Report of Rev. EDWIN BROWN, to the Wisconsin Historical Society. Note on the Discovery of a Human Skull in the Drift, near Denver, Colorado. By THOMAS BELT. The Geological Museum of the School of Mines, Columbia College. By ABRAHAM C. RUSSELL. A remarkably full and able account of one of the most important scientific collections in this country.
VI. ELECTRICITY AND MAGNETISM.—Dependence of Electro-Magnetic Engine. By COUNT DE MONCEL. A wonderful little motor.

## A SUBJECT FOR INVESTIGATION.

In another column we reprint a remarkably suggestive article from the London *Engineer* on the mysterious in boiler explosions.

In spite of conviction of the great majority of boiler inspectors, that boilers explode from inherent defects, weakness, or gross misuse, our learned and practical contemporary deems it beyond question that there is yet an element of mystery attending some of the catastrophes of the sort. Whileninety-nine in every hundred explosions may be clearly traceable to faults in material or construction, defects due to age or abuse, ignorance, carelessness, or neglect in management, or some other preventable cause, the *Engineer* believes, and is not alone in believing, that in the hundredth case the boiler may suddenly fly to pieces in the absence of all known conditions tending thereto.

The strength or weakness of this position hinges on the circumstance that when a new and strong boiler explodes "mysteriously" it is rarely possible to determine what the immediately antecedent conditions were. The engineer in attendance is usually killed; and there is no means of telling exactly what was the condition of the boiler, or what was going on in it, the moment before the explosion occurred. The recklessness, ignorance, or misconduct of the engineer may have brought about the disaster; but it is not safe to assume his fault in all cases, as the only alternative to indeterminable conditions.

In the Coltness case referred to, for example, "when six boilers out of ten flew away at once like a covey of birds," the boilers are described as strong enough to stand a pressure of 300 pounds, and it is not easy to see how such a pressure of steam could have been produced through any fault of the engineer or otherwise.

In a recent attempt to explain why boilers explode a Philadelphia paper says:

"If we could get down to the bottom facts of every boiler explosion it would probably be found, in nine cases out of ten, that the engineer in charge had permitted the water to get below the flues, and that, upon ascertaining the fact, he had, in his fright, turned cold water in upon the hot iron. No boiler that was ever made can withstand the tremendous pressure applied by the sudden conversion of a large volume of water into steam, and the reason why it cannot may easily be comprehended when it is remembered that one cubic foot of water will make seventeen hundred cubic feet of steam."

This theory is, and has been, widely accepted; and is a very plausible one for throwing the blame on the dead, who cannot contradict the charge. The circumstance, however, that to convert the cubic foot of water into steam would use up the spare heat of something over a quarter of a ton of red hot iron, makes the sudden conversion of a large volume of water into steam, in any ordinary boiler, altogether doubtful. As the *Engineer* pertinently remarks, it has never yet been shown how enough red hot iron could be present in any boiler to cause a development of steam with which the safety valves could not deal.

The electrical theory of explosion, the theory that under certain unknown conditions the decomposition and recombination of water may take place explosively, and similar guesses, are equally unsatisfactory when brought to critical test of fact and experiments. The circumstance that many explosions take place just when an engine is started suggests the possibility that the sudden reduction of pressure may cause a part of the water to flash into steam; and it is supposed that somehow, by some physical law not yet discovered, the flashing process may be self-continuing in spite of the restoration of the pressure. This, however, is sheer hypothesis, and involves conditions as mysterious as the mystery to be explained. And after all, what is wanted at this time is not a plausible explanation of an unavoidable disaster, but a critical investigation of the behavior of water and steam under all conceivable conditions likely to obtain in boilers. As soon as investigation has determined absolutely all the circumstances under which water explodes, the inventor will lose no time in furnishing a boiler which will not explode under intelligent management. Thanks to what has already been determined the range of mystery in boiler explosions has been narrowed, numerically speaking, to a fractional percentage. To remove the remaining mystery is a task that may well engage any ambitious student of physics, who wishes to gain an honorable fame by benefiting his kind.

## STILLE ON YELLOW FEVER.

At this time, when public attention is so forcibly drawn to the plague that prevails at Memphis and Havana, and threatens every commercial city of the country, our readers cannot fail to be interested in the critical review of the natural and clinical history of yellow fever, by Dr. Alfred Stille, in the current issue of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT.

There is probably no man living whose competence to discuss the subject is more widely recognized; and now that the newspapers are so full of speculation and error in respect to the origin and propagation of the disease, the profession as well as the public will be glad to know from him what he holds to be positively known about it.

Dr. Stille traces the origin of yellow fever to the West Indies. There it was first discovered; and from West India ports it has, in all instances, spread. It has never originated elsewhere, however favorable the conditions may have been for its rapid extension when once introduced. A high temperature is essential to its propagation; salt water and un-

sanitary conditions favor it; but the morbid poison must be imported in ships and fomites. A strict quarantine is always efficient in preventing the dissemination of the disease. It is not contagious. Its essential cause has never been isolated or defined, but is assumed to be a specific poison, distinct from all other fever poisons. It is spread by infection. In the system it acts primarily in two ways: by disintegrating the blood and by inflaming the stomach; secondarily, it tends to impair the eliminating function of the kidneys.

The evidence upon which these conclusions are founded, with much exact and timely information as to the character and behavior of the disease, and the effects of different modes of treatment, will be found in Dr. Stille's lecture, reported specially for the SUPPLEMENT.

## A NEW METHOD OF LOCATING LIGHTNING RODS.

The Brockton (Mass.) *Weekly Gazette* contains a long account of a so-called wonderful discovery which has been made by Messrs. George S. and A. R. Prescott, of Merrimac, Mass. These gentlemen have ascertained that "lightning never strikes the earth except in localities directly over what may perhaps be best described as electrical currents on or below its surface, with which currents the electrical discharge invariably communicates. This has been determined by a multitude of tests made in localities widely separated. It follows, therefore, that in places where these currents are not found to exist, no danger need be apprehended, as in upward of four thousand instances, where tests have been made during the past three years, no record can be found of any exception to this universal rule."

This is certainly a wonderful discovery and merits careful attention. The subject is in the domain of science, and it can be reasonably presumed that the Messrs. Prescott have some knowledge of electricity, especially of earth currents, since their work is claimed to be in the detection of such currents. Moreover, these gentlemen must have made use of scientific methods, which past experience has shown to be indispensable, or they must have created a new method which rests on a scientific basis and is not dependent upon the freaks of the observer.

On careful inquiry we have ascertained that the Messrs. Prescott lay no claim to a knowledge of science. They are farmers, and have gained their knowledge of agricultural operations from actual practice in this pursuit, and not from mere theories. Whatever success they have obtained in farming has been due to the experience which has been handed down to them and by a lifetime of labor in their chosen pursuit. Without any knowledge whatever of electricity, they have suddenly made a discovery which puts to the blush the labors of scientific men in meteorology; have curbed, so to speak, the thunderbolts of Jove; have within their reach an immense fortune; and, more than all, have demonstrated that honest ignorance can discover what skilled education has overlooked. Their method also has never been employed or even thought of by scientific men. We shall first describe it in practical operation, and then devote a few words to its theory. Having cut a forked stick from a tree—any kind of wood will answer, although the discoverers prefer a forked stick from an apple tree, an elm, or a hazel—the two forks are grasped firmly with both hands, leaving the portion above the fork projecting skyward and not earthward. With the stick held in this manner, and with a look which may be described as subliminal, the operator walks over the ground to and fro, here a little and there a little, until he perceives that the projecting part of the stick begins to point downward. Then he stops and announces that there is an earth current beneath him. He does not know what an earth current is, nor how it usually manifests itself, nor what tests are usually employed, nor does he need to know, for the green apple tree stick decides the point. He must not, however, wear rubber boots; leather boots are preferable. In this way four thousand tests have been made and repeated; sometimes with a green apple stick, sometimes with an elm stick. Changing the character of the stick, however, appeared to make no difference. Further experiments, however, are needed to clearly establish this point.

When the stick points to the ground it is clear evidence that a lightning rod must be led to this point. If no earth currents are found by this method, the house in this locality is pronounced to be safe, and does not need lightning rods. The Messrs. Prescott form a marked exception to the old adage that "a prophet is not without honor save in his own country and among his own kindred," for no other "lightning rod man" is employed in the neighborhood of their native town, Merrimac, and their fame has spread far and wide. Treasurers and presidents of banks, city engineers, teachers in academies and schools, proclaim that, however impossible it may seem, they have been witnesses to the Messrs. Prescott's skill—perhaps we should say to Mr. Prescott's skill, for one of the brothers excels the other in this matter—and no amount of scientific skepticism can change their faith in Mr. Prescott's discovery. Hundreds of people are ready to testify to the fact that Mr. Prescott has repeatedly discovered places where lightning has struck in the past; and on being led by the oldest inhabitant into places remote from the Prescott homestead, has infallibly proclaimed to the awestruck observers, "Lightning once struck within four feet or less of this point." So much for the practice. Now for the theory.

It is claimed that "the human frame is the most sensitive to electrical influences of any organized form. Indeed, so far as cognizant to the sense and present knowledge, elec-



tricity seems to be the factor of the mysterious principle of life in the work of the human system." Mr. Prescott has a wonderfully sensitive organization. He has the hitherto unknown "electric sense," and he can, to speak metaphorically, smell electricity or taste it in the air or earth. He is not, however, the only person who has claimed to have this power. If he and his friends will procure a copy of Baron Charles von Reichenbach's "Physico-Physiological Researches in the Dynamics of Magnetism, Electricity, Crystallization, and Chemism," published in Partridge & Brittain's Spiritual Library, it will be found that Mr. Prescott belongs to the class called sick sensitives; in other words, to a class of persons whose systems are supposed to be peculiarly sensitive from disease to general cosmical phenomena. In the same book will also be found a long account of the use of a forked stick, which use is there called Blé-tonism, from the name of an agricultural laborer who had great success in its use. It is evident that agriculture is about to assert itself in the cognate field of electricity and magnetism. An account of the forked stick can also be found in Dr. Hutton's Mathematical Recreations, which is a translation with additions of Montucla's improvement of Ozanam's Recreations. An account of the virtues of the forked stick can also be found in Dr. Herbert Mayo's "On the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions" Letter XII. (London, 3d ed., 1851). It may interest Mr. Prescott to know that his forked stick has various names. It has been called divining rod, virgula divina, baculus divinatorius, baquette divinatoire, and the wonders accomplished by its use have been testified to by thousands of people for more than a century. If Mr. Prescott is a reader of fiction, he will also find an account of Douster Swivel's use of the forked stick in Walter Scott's novel "The Antiquary."

It is said by Mr. Prescott's believers that if he did not use such an absurdly simple contrivance as a forked stick he would have more followers and make a greater fortune. Indeed, it has been proposed that he should get up a complicated contrivance with a maze of wheels and electro-magnets, which should have nothing, however, to do with his method; but walking forth in boots (leather), with the stick and the machine, he should attribute the discoveries to the machine. Pessimists claim that he would then be in entire sympathy with the age.

Briefly let us sum up the claims of the Prescotts. We shall put the claims against the evidence in the following table:

CLAIMS.	EVIDENCE.
A forked stick in the hands of a sensitive person is a scientific instrument capable of detecting earth currents.	No evidence has ever been submitted to men capable of judgment on this point. The belief is supported only by invalids, and is an evidence of invalidism.
Mr. Prescott belongs to the class called "sick sensitives."	No medical school of any standing believes in the powers of the "sick sensitives" to discover occult phenomena. No master of his profession believes in such powers.
Earth currents have a determinate direction, and under the action of thunderstorms will always take the same direction.	Earth currents do not have a determinate direction, and the influence of a thunderstorm does not determine their direction.
The electric discharge seeks to unite itself with earth currents.	No evidence. This can only be determined by electrical tests, which Mr. Prescott and his friends are incapable of making, from utter ignorance of the subject of electricity.

The above is our statement of the case, and it is only justice to Mr. Prescott and his followers to state his case in the same manner, with a few comments, which can be taken or rejected.

CLAIMS.	EVIDENCE.
Four thousand test cases, more or less.	Tests made of twigs from three or more kinds of trees, all taken from different localities, and cut by unprejudiced observers.
The testimony of innumerable people, including teachers in high schools, civil engineers, and prominent business men of high standing and respectability. They have seen with their own eyes. They have been convinced beyond all doubt.	Respectability has always had great weight in deciding upon scientific matters. It is reasonable to suppose that if a bank president or cashier maintains his good standing in the community, his judgment on any subject, even on one to which he has paid no attention, is of value. Civil engineers and teachers can be summoned as experts in matters of scientific evidence.

Mr. Prescott has eminently the air of an honest man. He has been known man and boy by his neighbors for many years.

In conclusion, the use of the forked stick is recommended to mining speculators and prospectors. Thousands of re-

spectable persons in the past have testified to its efficiency in discovering lodes of precious metals, and it is one of the strangest facts in human history that mankind has stubbornly refused to discover precious metals by the use of such a simple means, and have forced themselves into what may be called complicated and theoretical scientific methods.

#### LABOR AT HOME AND ABROAD.

The reports of American Consuls in Europe, with respect to the conditions of trade in their several districts, have in many instances been laid before the readers of this paper. It will be no news to them, accordingly, to be told that the average condition of industrial communities abroad is far below that which has obtained here, even in the worst of times. The effect of these reports is naturally intensified when they are massed together, with the evidence on which they were based, as they have been in a volume just issued by the Department of State. Covering, as they do, all phases of the labor question in Europe, these reports furnish a telling picture of the condition of the working people of Europe—their continued struggle with adverse circumstances—as compared with the condition of the working people of the United States, and show, as perhaps no single volume has ever done before, the difference between labor disfranchised, degraded, and hopeless, and labor free, honorable, thriving, and an equal sharer in political power.

The following deductions are said by the department to be clearly proved by the reports:

1. That wages in the United States are double those of Belgium, Denmark, France, and England, three times those of Germany, Italy, and Spain, and four times those of the Netherlands.
2. That the prices of the necessities of life are lower in the United States than in Europe, and that the laborer in the United States, were he satisfied with the scanty and miserable fare upon which the European laborer must live, can purchase like food for less money than it can be purchased for in Europe.
3. That the French working people, with far less wages, are happier than the working people of Great Britain, who receive the highest wages in Europe, on account of the steadiness and the economical habits of the former, and the strikes, drinking habits, and consequent recklessness of the latter.
4. That more misery results from strikes, drinking, socialism, and communism in England and Germany than from all other causes combined, hard times included.

#### DRAGON FLIES.

"Dragon flies," "mosquito hawks," "devil's darning needles"—these are some of the common names for certain well known neuropterous insects of the family *Libellulidae*. They are commonly seen skimming in swift flight over the surfaces of ponds and other bodies of still water. The head and thorax are greatly enlarged—the eyes entirely covering the sides of the former—and the hind body is very long and slender, terminating in the male with a pair of clasps for seizing the female. The two pairs of wings are nearly equal in size, transparent, and finely netted, and in many species clouded with broad bands of brown, blue, or crimson. The flies attach their eggs to the submerged leaves of aquatic plants or drop them carelessly upon the surface of the water.

The larvæ are aquatic, living at the bottom of the pool or stream they inhabit, and breathing by means of *tracheæ* situated in the tail. They are further characterized by what is known as a "mask," which is an elbowed extension of the *labium* or under lip, and is armed at the extremity with two sharp hooks for seizing and holding the prey. When not in use this apparatus is folded up over the lower part of the face, but to grasp a victim may be suddenly thrust forward. These dragon fly larvæ feed upon young mosquitoes or "wrigglers" and other aquatic insects, particularly the young of May flies (*Ephemeroidea*). They are active and predacious in the pupa as well as in the larva and perfect states. When about to change into a fly the pupa leaves the water and crawls upon some plant or other object above the surface of the water. After clinging there a short time a rent appears on the top of the thorax, through which the fly emerges.—Prof. C. V. Riley.

#### Louis Favre.

The news of the death of Mr. Louis Favre, the contractor of the Great Tunnel of the St. Gothard, spread through the city of Geneva on Saturday, July 19, calling forth, says the *Swiss Times*, universal expression of sympathy and regret. Louis Favre was a man of more than ordinary merit. He commenced life as a day laborer and won his way up to the front rank by sheer force of will and honest industry. This name will be handed down to posterity in connection with the great enterprise of his life, and his descendants may speak of him with more pride as Favre du Gothard than if he had been born to one of the thousand titles to a *de* or a *com*. At the time of his death he had overcome the great obstacles to the success of his gigantic undertaking, and it is no secret that these obstacles came rather from men than from nature. He falls, as fell *Sommelier* of the Mont Cenis, after years of persistent and weary warfare at the moment when his labors were to be crowned with honor, riches, and the calm enjoyment of a world-wide reputation which all men love so well.

To those who had the good fortune to meet him in his great natural workshop, the bowels of the St. Gothard, he

leaves a remembrance of a lion hearted man, endowed with all the charm which comes from strong will tempered by rich experience and a buoyancy of spirits which nothing could repress.

#### THE AMERICAN ONION-SMUT IN FRANCE.

According to M. Max. Cornu, in a note recently presented to the French Academy, the onions are being attacked in the vicinity of Paris by a fungus which fills the interior of the bulb-scales and the base of the leaves with a black powder. A longitudinal section of the bulbs attacked (which belong to the early variety of the white onion and the onion of Nancy) shows that the black dust occupies the entire substance of the scales or of the leaves. The presence of the parasite, in addition to the decay which it produces, greatly modifies and alters the normally white appearance of the onions. The black dust, examined with the microscope, is seen to be composed solely of an enormous quantity of spores; and these spores are characteristic of a genus of *ustilagineæ*, which was first called *polycystis* by Leveillé, and afterwards *urocystis* by Robenhorst.

The particular species under consideration is new, not only to France, but to Europe, and is not mentioned in the works of Tulasne. Dr. Farlow, of Harvard College, in his report on the diseases of onions, first called attention to it, and described it as new under the name of *urocystis cepulae*. It is only in recent years that the fungus has made its appearance in America, its ravages for a dozen years past having been confined to the States of Connecticut and Massachusetts, where the culture of onions forms an important branch of agriculture. Here it has produced a damage amounting to many thousands of dollars a year. At the date of Dr. Farlow's report the disease was as yet unknown in New York. Dr. Farlow thinks that the fungus has come from some of our wild species of onions. Mixing the seeds with lime or special treatments of the soil have no effect, and it appears that it is necessary to wait four years before commencing onion culture in the same soil again. "It is not the first time," says M. Cornu, "that a new infection has come to us from America. Without citing the *phyloxera* and *dorysophora*, insects equally to be feared, I may mention the *oidium* of the vine, and *puccinia malvacearum*, the latter of which I first noticed the presence of in Europe."

We are willing to father the potato-bug, the *phyloxera*, and, perhaps, the onion-smut, since it was first detected here; but the so-called "oidium" of the vine occurs here, not on native vines, but on those of European species raised in hot-houses. As for the mallows-brand (*puccinia malvacearum*), no American mycologist has as yet reported its presence among us; we have seen specimens from Africa, however.

#### NORDENSKJÖLD'S EXPEDITION.

The fact was announced not long since that Professor Nordenskjöld's expedition had survived the winter, ice bound near East Cape, Siberia, and that the explorer hoped soon to be able to proceed to Behring Strait, about 400 geographical miles from the Vega's winter quarters. Dispatches from Stockholm and Berlin, August 3 and 4, state that the Vega had got clear of ice and passed the strait; but no information is given of the route through which the alleged intelligence came. On the other hand, the Alaska Fur Company at San Francisco strongly doubt the truth of the report. Their advices from the neighborhood of Behring Strait were to the effect that the season had been very late on the Asiatic side, and that strong east winds had prevailed, piling up the ice so as to make the possible passage of the Vega very doubtful.

#### Activity in the Iron Trade.

Though it is now midsummer, usually a dull season in the iron trade, the demand for iron is great and prices are tending upward. The intelligent secretary of the Iron and Steel Association of the United States predicts that the product this year will be the largest the country has known. He also believes that the activity which prevails to-day in all branches of the iron and steel trade will continue for at least a year to come. Nearly all the favorably situated rolling mills are in operation, and numbers of these mills, as well as furnaces and steel works, have orders ahead for several months. The truth is the iron industry has been so long under a cloud that the actual need of iron throughout the country is enormous.

MANY persons are puzzled to understand what the terms "fourpenny," "sixpenny," and "tenpenny" mean as applied to nails. "Fourpenny" means four pounds to the thousand nails, or "sixpenny" means six pounds to the thousand, and so on. It is an old English term, and meant at first "ten pound" nails (the thousand being understood), but the old English clipped it to "tenpen," and from that it degenerated until "penny" was substituted for "pounds." When a thousand nails weigh less than one pound they are called tacks, brads, etc., and are reckoned by ounces.

#### The Paper Makers' Association.

The second annual convention of the Paper Makers' Association of America assembled at the Grand Union Hotel, Saratoga, N. Y., July 30. About forty manufacturers were present. Wellington Smith, of Lee, Mass., presided. He said that although prices were lower than last year the trade was in a better condition, there being an increased demand; that a year ago the trade was in the lowest condition ever known, but now the mills throughout the country were running on full time.



### THE HOLLY SYSTEM OF STEAM HEATING.

These are the days of large enterprises, when things are done by wholesale, by a massing of labor and a concentration of capital. Many of our daily wants are supplied not by the simple, single-handed ways of our forefathers, but by a system of supply which economizes labor and lessens expense. Our light comes to us through pipes in the streets; the water used by the thousands of families in any of our large cities comes from a single source of supply; many of our other needs are supplied in a similar way; and now, at last, our dwellings and places of business, our churches and public buildings, are to be heated from a common center.

We have on one or two former occasions alluded to the Holly system of steam heating, controlled by the Holly Steam Combination Company, of Lockport, N. Y., and now we are able to present our readers with engravings representing some of the details of the system. Heating by steam has been practiced for years; but it has been accomplished by placing the steam generator as near the radiators as possible. This has demonstrated the desirability of steam as a heating agent, and at the same time has proved its hygienic and economic superiority over other methods of heating. The Holly system goes a step further and increases the measure of economy and safety, and decreases the labor con-

nected with steam heating by generating the steam at a central station, and supplying a large area with steam for heating, for cooking, and for power, through underground pipes, thoroughly protected against radiation, and provided with expansion joints, steam meters, pressure regulators,

taken off. Thus each consumer pays for what he uses, and for no more. In this way equitable dealing is maintained between the company and its consumers.

The steam may be used to great advantage in cooking. In many large hotels the greater part of the cooking is done

by steam and gas, but the apparatus is too expensive to go into general use. A stove, made of sheet copper, galvanized iron, or tin, at a slight cost, is used in connection with this system. The center opening is nine inches, and those around the outside six inches, making seven openings in all. The central steamer may be quite long, extending downward, with compartments, so as to cook several kinds of vegetables at the same time. There are receptacles for cooking oysters, custard, tea, coffee, puddings, etc., all at the same time. Cooking can be done more quickly and better than by a wood or coal stove, and without danger of burning, and avoiding extreme

heat in the room during warm weather. The steam made with one pound of coal will cook these articles in less time than it would take to start a good coal fire. The steam can be taken from the air valve of the radiator through a small rubber hose, into the bottom of the central column of the stove.

In addition to the uses already enumerated the steam may be used as a source of power. Steam fire engines used in

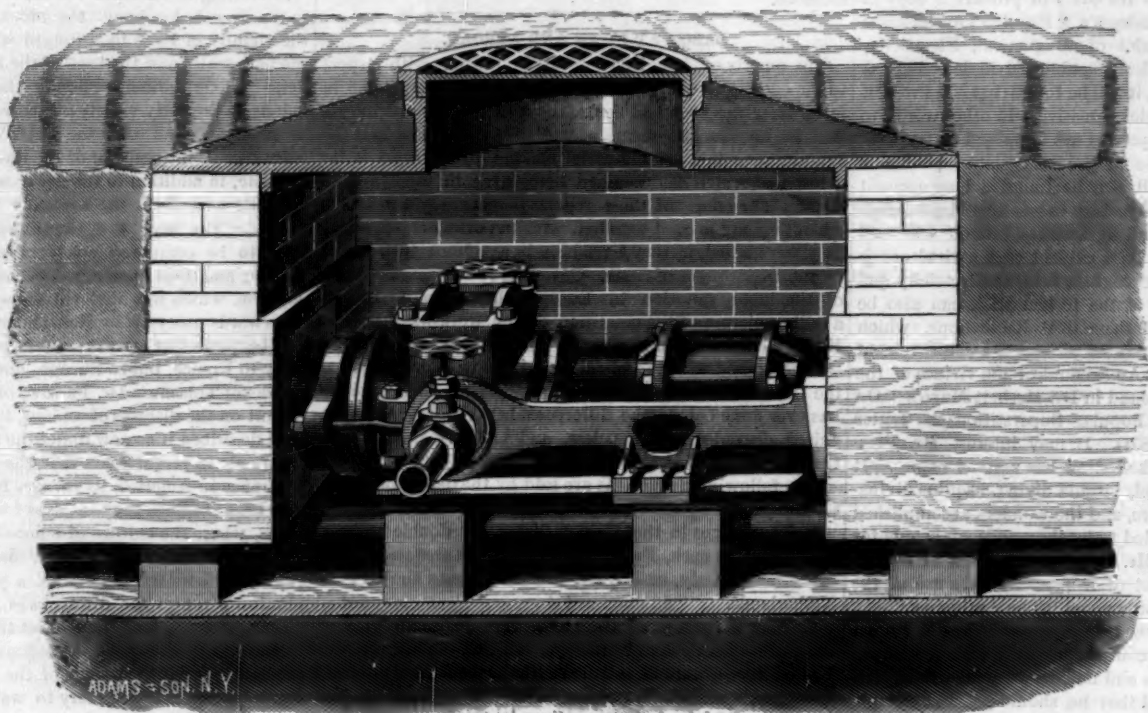


Fig. 1.—EXPANSION SERVICE BOX.

and other apparatus necessary to the perfect working of the system.

The first experiment on a grand scale was tried in January, 1877, in the city of Lockport. Three miles of underground pipe were employed to thoroughly test the feasibility of the project. It proved a complete success, and the company is now engaged in introducing the system into several of the larger cities in this country.

In the pipes used in this system, an expansion junction service box, Fig. 1, is placed at intervals of 100 to 200 feet. This provides for the free longitudinal expansion and contraction of the mains, and from this box the service pipes are carried underground to the basement of buildings to be heated. The service pipes, having an adjustable hood inside the junction box, may be turned downward, thus taking up the water of condensation as fast as it accumulates, and carrying it forward to the regulator valve inside the cellar walls, as shown in Fig. 2. At this point, the water of condensation being at the degree of heat due to 50 lb. pressure to the square inch, is wire drawn, and by this reduction of pressure it is largely reconverted into steam, and is carried on to the radiators, where it is again condensed. By this device it will be seen that although 50 lb. pressure is carried in the mains, it may be reduced to one or two pounds in the building, and therefore in a house two or three miles distant from the boiler there will be precisely the same result as in a building only a few feet away. The consumer living near the boiler house will have no advantage over the consumer living a mile away, since each will ordinarily carry the same house pressure—and consequently at the same temperature.

This system admits of the use of all kinds of radiators; but the new atmospheric radiator invented by Mr. Holly (shown in Fig. 3) is probably preferable to anything else, as the internal pressure and external atmospheric pressure are equal, admitting of the use of thin sheet metal in their construction. Steam may be admitted to the radiator so that it will cover any proportion of its inner surface, and being very thin, the same amount of surface will give off more heat than the ordinary heavy cast iron or wrought iron radiators.

The distributing pipes are freed from water by a steam trap (Fig. 4) invented by Mr. Holly. The water resulting from condensation in the building is delivered to an accumulator, from which it may be forced by steam pressure at any time to a tank in the attic, to be distributed through the house for general use as it may be required. A vertical section of a dwelling, provided with this heating apparatus, is shown in Fig. 5. The supply pipe and expansion joint are seen under the sidewalk. The regulator stands in the basement, and the radiators are shown in position on the several floors.

The steam used by each consumer makes its own record upon a strip of paper moved by the clockwork of the meter (Fig. 2). The pencil denotes the quantity of steam used, and the time of day at which each radiator in the house was put on or

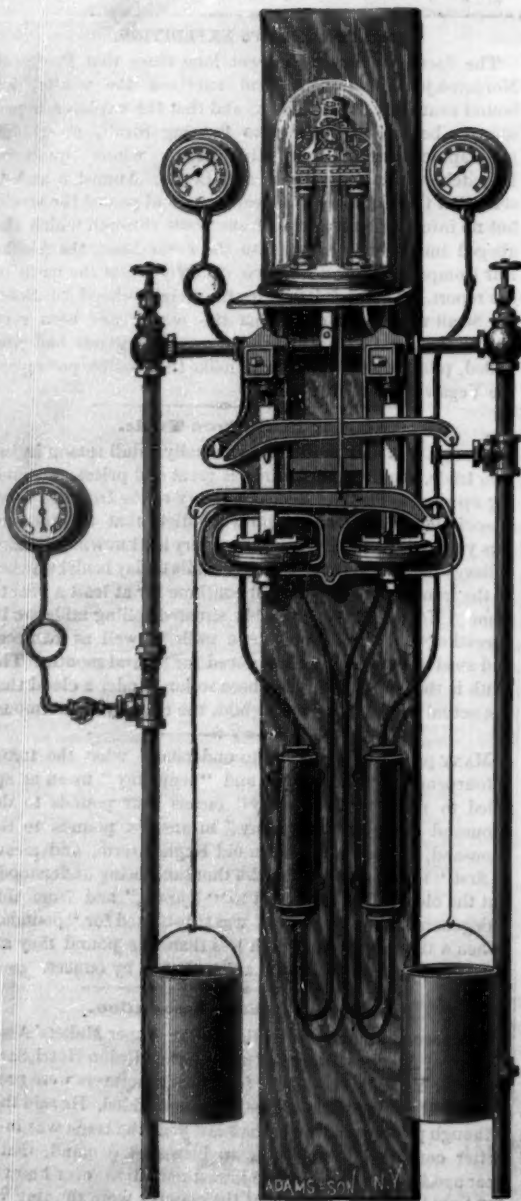


Fig. 2.—REGULATOR AND METER.



Fig. 3.—HOLLY'S RADIATORS.



connection with the system will need no boiler, and may therefore be made very light and portable, and one of the principal items of expense will be avoided.

Snow and ice can easily and cheaply be removed by steam from streets and sidewalks, where in large cities it is frequently a serious obstacle to ordinary locomotion and traffic. A receptacle one by six feet, near the curbstone, with a steam coil at the bottom, will melt the snow as fast as delivered therein, and the water will be conveyed to the adjacent sewer. Experiments show that the cost in fuel of melting a ton of snow in this manner will not exceed five cents.

The matter of steam supply for large districts is no longer a question of experiment. Two or three years of actual test have established this system as one of the institutions that conduce to the comfort and safety of the masses; and we may expect at no distant day to see the inhabitants of our cities and villages enjoying the comforts of an equable temperature, a healthy atmosphere, and a safe and convenient power for driving machinery either small or large.

#### European Railway Speeds.

A paper has been published in Germany showing the different rates of velocity at which railway trains travel in different countries. According to this table, the swiftest runs are in England, between London and Dover, London and York, London and Hastings, where the average reaches 80 kilos—50 miles—an hour. In Belgium some trains travel as fast as 67 kilos—nearly 42 miles. The express trains from Paris to Bordeaux, Orleans line, average 63 kilos—39½ miles; the same speed is attained by the express trains between Berlin and Cologne. Between Bologna and Brindisi the average maximum is 50 kilos—nearly 31¼ miles. The average Austrian express speed is from 40 to 48 kilos—25 to 30 miles. On the Moscow and St. Petersburg line one travels at the rate of 43 kilos—nearly 27 miles—per hour; the same speed is observed in Switzerland between Geneva and Lausanne, and between Zurich and Romanshorn. But on the other Swiss lines one must be content with a slower pace. Thus from Zurich to Basel the highest speed is 38 kilos; and between Basel and Berne, 34—nay, between Soleure and Bergdorf the moderate gait of 25 kilos, or a little more than 15½ miles an hour, is observed. There are in Switzerland no purely “through” trains.

#### Havana the Pest-Breeding Place.

Dr. Chaillé, chairman of the Havana Commission, has lately written to the National Board of Health as follows:

As to the sanitary condition of Havana and of its harbor it would be difficult to devise conditions more favorable to propagate disease. Built upon a thin layer of earth which covers extremely porous coral rocks, this foundation is deeply saturated with the excrements of many thousands of human beings and of animals, continuously deposited throughout a long series of years. Nothing can be worse or more offensive than the privy system of Havana. Associated with the evil hygienic conditions of the city the harbor is, if possible, in even fouler condition.

This harbor, about one mile long, two thirds of a mile wide, and some thirty feet deep in the deepest places, has a difference between its minimum low and its maximum high tide of less than two feet; and into this almost stagnant pond is daily poured the sewage of the city, the offal of the slaughter houses, and the refuse from at least two large hospitals habitually infected with yellow fever and located on the very edge of the harbor. The fecal odor from this harbor is often distinctly perceptible.

Among other things done, at the suggestion of Dr. Daniel M. Burgess, of Havana, to whom I owe much, I have inspected the ballast sold to and transported by ships from this port. Repeatedly has the ballast from this port been accused of causing outbreaks of yellow fever in ports of the United States, and as repeatedly has this been discredited. I have no hesitation in asserting, as the result of personal examination, that if there be anything whatever which can serve as fomites to transport yellow fever poison, the ballast from this port appears to be eminently fitted for this purpose. In my opinion, the National Board of Health should at once adopt such measures as may be needful to protect our ports against the dangerous risks they are subjected to by all ballast from this port.

#### New Use for Coconut Milk.

Dr. George M. Sternberg, Secretary of the National Health Commission, now at Havana, says:

I find that the air of our laboratory is loaded by minute spherical organisms, and contains bacteria not distinguishable from *bacterium termo*. I have made some experiments for testing apparatus designed for the purpose of keeping putrid fluids germ-proof, using for my test the liquor from the interior of an

unripe coconut. This liquor possesses properties which will, I believe, make it of great value. . . . It is transparent as water when the nut is not too ripe, is contained in a germ-proof receptacle (the coconut), and when exposed to the air, bacteria and other organisms develop with astonishing rapidity. In my first experiment two portions from the

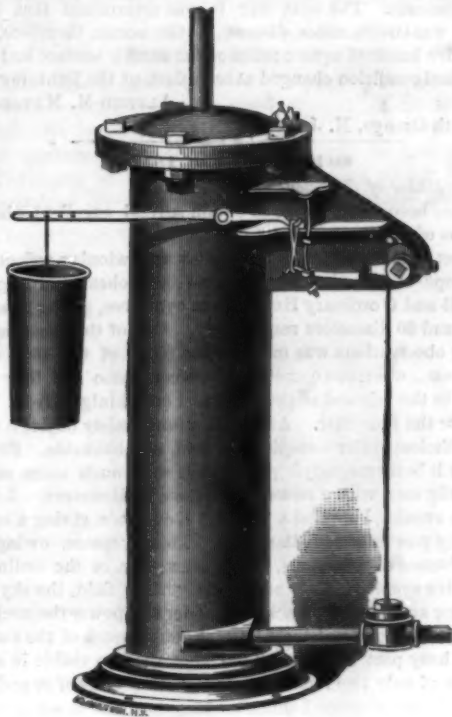


Fig. 4.—STEAM TRAP.

same nut were placed in small beakers, one exposed to the air and the other protected by the glass cover and bell jar (Lister's apparatus), with previous precaution of heating apparatus to 320°. The following morning the portion exposed to the air was milky in appearance and loaded with bacteria large and small, and had upon its surface a pellicle containing the cells of some fungus; the portion under the bell jar was clear as water. I have succeeded in keeping this liquor in quantity for three days in a Florence flask, made germ proof by heating to 320° Fah., and provided with a cotton

germ filter. I have made several good negatives of bacteria developed in coconut liquor for the purpose of testing my lenses and apparatus. I propose to continue the experiments commenced during the ensuing week.

#### Hollway's Metallurgical Process.

The Council of the Society of Arts, London, in their annual report, state that, looking at the character of all the papers brought before the Society during the year, the Council feels that they will compare favorably with those of any previous session. It would take too long to discuss the respective merits of all the papers which have been read since Christmas, they were all of considerable value; but amongst them are some deserving special mention, and in Mr. Hollway's paper on "A New Process in Metallurgy" were embodied the results of some of the most important experiments which have recently been made in that science. Mr. Hollway proposes to reduce metallic sulphides by using the ore itself as the chief fuel for the reduction. This is done by forcing a current of air through the molten sulphides. At first the combustion is started by using coke, but afterwards it is found that sufficient heat is generated by the oxidation of the sulphides, without any further addition of carbon. The process has not yet passed beyond the experimental stage, but should it prove a commercial success, it will effect a most important economy in one of the largest industries in this kingdom. So great was the interest aroused by Mr. Hollway's paper, that it became necessary to devote a second evening to its discussion; on both occasions the room was crowded, and the discussion was of an important and influential character, the opinions expressed being almost uniformly favorable. Of all the papers read before the Society during the year, Mr. Hollway's is the one the Council consider the most remarkable and the most important. Should the process at all carry out the expectations of its inventor—and he is supported by some of our leading chemists—it will add one more to the many great inventions which it has been the constant aim of this Society to introduce to the world.

#### Gelatine.

Gelatine, it is said, has a peculiar action on gum; if gum be added to gelatine, and the mixture sensitized with ammoniacal potassium bichromate, the behavior of the latter substance is very little altered by the addition of the former. Its solubility in hot water is somewhat increased, and to obtain the same degree of insolubility for the image as with pure gelatine the exposure must be longer. But if the mixture be acidulated with acetic acid, the film after exposure and desiccation is less soluble than one consisting of chromated gelatine only with acetic acid. Gum, therefore, renders an acid solution of gelatine less soluble, and the reason for this is believed to be that gluten and arabic acid form a compound solid only with difficulty. Borax thickens a gelatine solution, and the alkaline reaction of the same substance tends to render the chromated gelatine more insoluble. Calcium nitrate gives to gum an enormous power of adhesiveness.

#### Gas Lighting Experiments.

Colonel Haywood, C.E., the engineer to the City Commissioners of Sewers, London, has reported to them the results of an experiment now being made in a portion of Queen Victoria street, between Mansion House Station and the Poultry, with new gas burners, by the Gas Light and Coke Company, at their own expense.

The experiments commenced on the 6th March. The new lamps are fitted with Sugg's London Argand "Governor" burners, with glass chimneys. They are of two sizes—one consuming 22 cubic feet of gas per hour, the other 50 cubic feet. The gas is consumed in the smaller burners in two concentric columns or rings of flame, and in the larger burners in three rings. The burners are so arranged as to be self-lighting when the gas is fully turned on. They are in lanterns of an improved description, the smaller in lanterns octagonal in plan, and the larger in twelve-sided lanterns. Both lanterns are larger than those ordinarily used, and have the upper parts glazed with a new kind of white glass, which partly reflects and partly transmits the light. The lower portions are glazed with ordinary clear glass.

Proper means are provided for ventilation and preventing down draughts. There are 30 of the smaller and 5 of the larger lamps, and they supersede 55 ordinary lamps. The length of the street lighted is 355 yards. The burners consuming 22 feet of gas per hour have an estimated illuminating power of 80 candles, and thus 30 lamps are equal to 2,400 candles. The 50 foot burners have a power of 200 candles, and five lamps are thus equal to 1,000 candles. The ordinary lamps temporarily superseded are equal to 770 candles, or 4½ times less than the experimental lamps. The cost of the 55 ordinary lamps superseded is £4 17s. 6d. each per annum, or £368 2s. 6d.

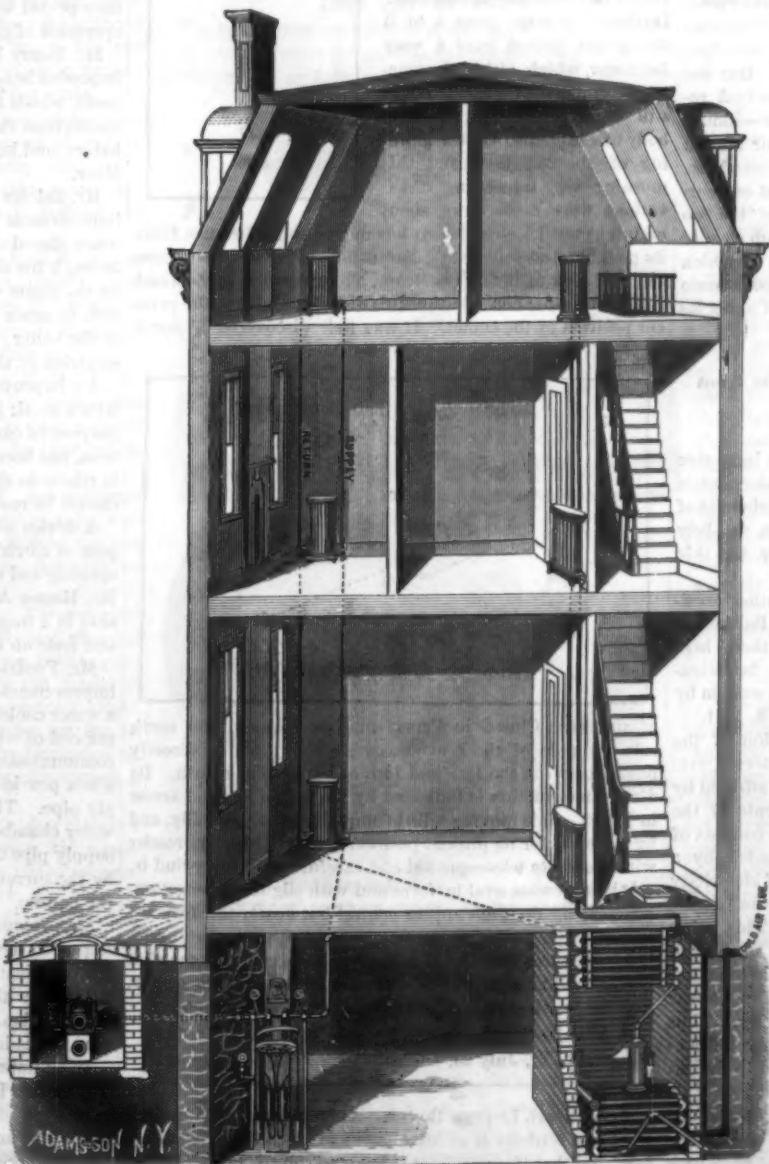


Fig. 5.—INTERIOR ARRANGEMENT OF HEATING APPARATUS.



in all. The cost of the smaller experimental lamps is £15 1s. each per year, and of the larger £41 2s. 6d., or £777 2s. 6d. in all. The new system, therefore, is nearly three times more costly than the old. The general result, therefore, is that the new system gives nearly  $4\frac{1}{2}$  times as much light as that in general use, and costs about three times as much. It should be added that the experiment is being conducted at the sole cost of the company.

### Correspondence.

#### An Invention Called For.

To the Editor of the Scientific American:

There is one invention which is very much needed by the farmers of America, one which would add millions to their income, millions to the commerce of our country, and one which, if it can be invented and successfully operated, will make the inventor a millionaire. It is some kind of a machine by which the loss in the wheat crop will be reduced to, say, one fifth of the crop.

I will give you an idea of the loss in the crop by stating an experiment which I have tried this summer to test the loss. A neighbor had a field of 85 acres near my house, which was judged to make 10 to 20 bushels per acre. When fully ripe I selected one square yard, which I was sure was less than an average of the field, cut, dried, and rubbed it out very carefully. It weighed 6 oz. Calculating from that datum, the field made 2,571 bushels. When the crop was cut it was saved as clean as is usual, and was as cleanly thrashed as any I ever saw; and yet he only got 1,050 bushels, which shows a clear loss of 1,521 bushels; in other words, he saved about two fifths and lost three fifths of the crop.

I have never known more than one half of a crop saved even by the most careful management. It seems to me that one fifth, or 500 bushels, in 2,500 would be a heavy loss, but when it is 1,500 in a crop of 2,500, it is unbearable.

I think if you will present this subject, through the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, to the inventive geniuses of our country, that some of them will probably invent machinery by which this tremendous loss will be at least greatly reduced. It may be proper to say that the wheat was cut with cradles, and cut very clean, the field thoroughly raked, and it was thrashed by an A No. 1 steam thrasher. Will the farmers who see this try similar experiments next harvest and note their losses?

Very respectfully,

F. W. CONNOR.

King George Co., Va., July 29, 1879.

[The foregoing is suggestive, to say the least; and we should be glad to hear of further experiments to determine the amount and the occasion of the discrepancy described. The loss of ripe grain by the depredation of birds, squirrels, rats, mice, and other vermin, is unquestionably considerable. There is a further loss by wastage in the process of harvesting, especially when any portion of the crop is over-ripe, due to tardy harvesting or to irregular ripening. But the assertion that three fifths of an entire crop—the actual returns of which exceeded the farmer's expectation—should be lost in harvesting, or that more than half our annual wheat crops are regularly lost that way, is simply incredible. We fear—no, not that; we are glad to believe—that our correspondence has but added another illustration of the too common habit of drawing sweeping conclusions from slender observation. One square yard is too small an area on which to base a judgment of the yield of over 400,000 square yards; as a test for the probable loss on millions of acres its value is inappreciable.—Eds.]

#### The Inductive Action of Lightning.—A Note from Professor Mayer.

To the Editor of the Scientific American:

The following account of experiments on the inductive actions of lightning, may be interesting to your readers, when viewed in connection with the remarkable experiments of Mr. George M. Hopkins, which were described in the July 19 number of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, under the title "The Telephone as a Lightning Indicator."

These experiments of mine were made at my mother's residence, in the northwestern portion of the city of Baltimore, during the summer of 1863. The account of them here given is taken from a review of Professor Rood's investigations on the time of duration of the electric spark, written by me for the New York Evening Post of September 8, 1871.

Astonishing as is the fact of the concentration of the power of a lightning flash into such a minute interval, yet, as wonderful is the extent of the earth's surface affected by it; as will be seen from the following experiments of the writer, never before published: A galvanometer consists of a delicately suspended magnetic needle surrounded by a coil of copper wire, through which a current of electricity can pass; whenever this passage takes place the needle rapidly turns around its point of suspension. This being understood, I connected one end of the wire coil of the galvanometer with the water pipes of Baltimore, while the other end of the wire coil was joined to a gas pipe of the house which is situated in the northwestern part of the city. Thus a vast system of metallic wires stretched away three miles to the northwest, to the reservoir, and also extended to the gas works, distant two to three miles to the southeast.

A thunder storm was raging at the time, at so great a distance in the north that only the illumination of the clouds told when a flash occurred. Yet, whenever that flash took place, the needle of the galvanometer was instantly deflected

through 10 to 20 degrees. The two occurrences were simultaneous, apparently, for I could detect no difference in the instant of their manifestation. Indeed, so sure an indicator of the flash was the galvanometer, that when I shut myself up in a dark room, signaling to an observer of the storm when the needle moved, and receiving from him a signal when a flash of lightning occurred, our signals were simultaneous. The next day it was ascertained that the storm was twelve miles distant to the north; therefore, at least five hundred square miles of the earth's surface had its electrical condition changed at each flash of the lightning.

ALFRED M. MAYER.

South Orange, N. J.

#### Swift's Comet of 1879.

To the Editor of the Scientific American:

It has been my pleasure to obtain several excellent observations of Dr. Swift's comet of 1879.

Observations have been made with a Newtonian reflecting telescope of 5 inches aperture and 50 inches focal length, with B and C ordinary Huyghenian eyepieces, giving powers of 40 and 60 diameters respectively. One of the most interesting observations was made on the night of the 16th and 17th inst., when the comet was between three and four degrees to the left and slightly upward (at midnight) from Polaris or the Pole Star. Although a faint, misty object it was nevertheless quite conspicuous and unmistakable. For a comet it bears magnifying well, as it was much more satisfactorily seen with a power of 60 than 40 diameters. Later in the evening I applied a "solid" E eyepiece, giving a magnifying power of 140 diameters. This eyepiece, owing to the absence of reflections, which take place in the ordinary negative eyepiece, gives an intensely dark field, the sky appearing an almost jet black, and under this power the nucleus was quite bright and sparkling, although much of the outer, more hazy part was lost. The comet was also visible in a reflector of only two inches aperture, with powers of 30 and 45; and in clear weather I think no one could fail to see it with this aperture if possessed with keen eyesight, although I consider it a severe test with ordinary eyepieces.

During the three hours in which I had the comet under observation (with only occasional rests to render the eye more sensitive to details) I had a most beautiful and awe-inspiring view of its motion among the stars. The observations extended from 10 o'clock P.M. to 1 o'clock A.M. When first seen it formed, with three faint stars, a rather condensed Y, the comet being at the center or fork, but at 1 o'clock it had moved to the foot of the same, thus: A (Fig. 1) shows its first position and B at the close of observations. This was the inverted or telescopic appearance. During its passage from A to B the comet passed over a very faint star, which, although somewhat dimmed thereby, could still be seen through the hazy body of the comet. On the morning of the 23d inst. and this morning very interesting observations were made from about midnight until 1 o'clock. It has moved some distance from its position first referred to, and is now on a line drawn from the Pole Star to Beta Ursæ Minor, and pointed at by Zeta and Eta of the same constellation (see Fig. 2). C shows the present position of the comet. It was first discovered 5° north

Fig. 1.

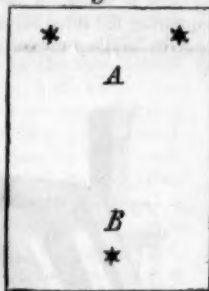
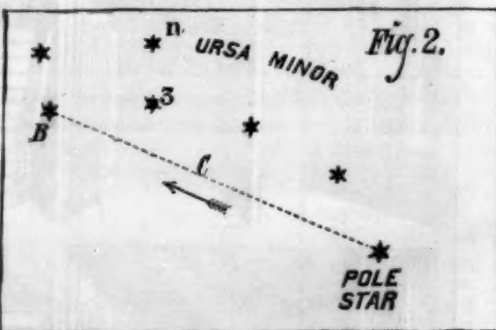


Fig. 2.



of the Great Cluster in Perseus, moving toward the north celestial pole of the heavens, over which it almost directly passed between the 13th and 14th of the present month. Its direction of motion is indicated by the dotted line and arrow in Fig. 2. It is moving a little more than 1 degree daily, and by taking C for its present position (25th of July) any reader with moderate telescopic aid and careful search may find it.

It is somewhat oval in form and with slight condensation, which to me does not appear central but nearer the forward or preceding limb. It is also my impression that under large apertures like the Washington telescope a somewhat blunted tail must be visible, the same cut away in the center, in other words double.

WILLIAM ROBERT BROOKS.

Red House Observatory,  
Phelps, N. Y., July 25, 1879.

ELECTRICAL LETTER BOXES.—Among the recent applications of electricity is an attachment to street letter boxes, so arranged that if an attempt is made to rob the box an alarm will be instantly sounded at the nearest police station.

#### MISCELLANEOUS INVENTIONS.

Mr. Edwin N. Cowdery, of Kalamazoo, Mich., has invented a windmill having its wheel and vane hung upon horizontal trunnions, so that the wheel will be balanced normally by the vane, and may be swung to present the edge of the wheel more or less to the wind. A weighted arm is connected to the vane-staff so as to move with the staff and wheel, and balance the parts in whatever position they may be turned by the wind.

A device for preventing saws when they are in motion from deviating from their proper course, and thereby producing boards of irregular thickness, has been patented by Messrs. I. N. Kendall, of Buckingham, and R. Hall, of Gatineau Mills, Quebec, Canada.

An improved cigar-box has been patented by Mr. Charles Heylmann, of Chicago, Ill. This invention relates to an improved construction of cigar-boxes, by which the cigars may be more advantageously exhibited for retailing, and the boxes arranged without any loss of space or inconvenience in the show-case.

Mr. William H. Allen, of No. 18 West 11th Street, New York city, has patented an improved automatic grain weigher and register for weighing grain, flour, and other similar substances as they flow from a spout into a hopper or receiver. The apparatus is so constructed as to deliver the substance in exact and uniform quantities and accurately register the quantity delivered. The invention consists in an arrangement of an open bottomed suspended vessel having a pivoted partition and supported upon a scale beam of peculiar construction. The relation of the supply spout and pivoted partition is such that the latter is held in position by the former until the vessel contains the required amount, when the downward movement of the vessel releases the pivoted partition, the grain escapes, and the recording mechanism is operated. The parts automatically regain their normal position and the vessel again fills and discharges.

Mr. Emanuel J. Trum, of Brooklyn, N. Y., has patented an improved calendar, which will display two successive months and days of the week in their proper order opposite figures indicating the days of the month. The invention consists in placing the figures of the calendar on a card, and above and below these strips of paper or card, on which are printed the month, year, and days of the week, one strip indicating the month last past and the other the current month.

Mr. William Wilmington, of Toledo, Ohio, has patented improvements in the moulds used in casting car wheels. The invention consists in inclosing the outer periphery and a portion of the bottom of the chill in a suitable ring, while a portion of the top of the chill is embraced by the bottom of the cope, provided with mechanical devices that will retain the chill in place when moulding the wheel, and at a later period will permit the chill to expand freely during the operation of casting.

Mr. Henry R. Robbins, of Baltimore, Md., has patented an improved letter box of the kind ordinarily located upon lamp-posts, which indicates the time of the collection of the mails throughout the day, provides an increased security for the letters, and keeps the letters and papers separate from each other.

Mr. Zelotes McKinley, of Camden, Mich., has invented an improvement in the class of washboilers constructed so that when placed over a fire a circulation of water is induced through the clothes, the hot water from below being raised by the steam and poured over the clothes in a stream or cascade to again find its way back to the chamber in the bottom of the boiler. The invention consists in the peculiar construction of the false bottom of the boiler.

An improvement in the class of middlings purifiers, in which an air blast passes through a sieve or screen for the purpose of carrying off the dust, fuzz, and light particles of bran, has been patented by Mr. Jacob Fitz, of Hanover, Pa. It relates to the construction and arrangement of parts, which cannot be readily described without an engraving.

A device adapted for attachment to a churn for the purpose of catching the cream that escapes through the dash opening and returning it to the churn, has been patented by Mr. Homer A. Noe, of Republic, Mo. The invention consists in a trapping device that is placed upon the dash rod and rests on the churn cover.

Mr. Fredrick R. Lewis, of Troy, N. Y., has invented an improvement in water coolers, which consists in furnishing a water cooler with a central water tube or chamber, the upper end of which is carried to the side wall of the cooler, and communicates through an aperture in the inside lining with a box provided with a filter and connected with a water supply pipe. The space between the walls of the cooler and the water chamber receives the ice. The water passes from the supply pipe through the filter to the water chamber, is cooled by the surrounding ice, and drawn off through a faucet in the bottom.

Mr. August Witte, of Kansas City, Mo., has invented an improved device for holding a door open, which consists in the combination of a base plate provided with lugs, a pawl provided with an arm and a hook, and a catch-plate provided with the flange, the parts being arranged so that the device may be readily operated by the foot.

In an improvement in extension stovepipes, patented by Mr. Robert R. Pattison, of Terre Haute, Ind., the inventor makes use of pipe in lengths, fitted together to move telescopically upon each other, and fitted with a spring catch of peculiar construction, whereby the pipes are held securely in any position to which they are adjusted.



Mr. James W. Winn, of Haverhill, Mass., has invented an improved boot and shoe protector, which saves the sole of the shoe from wear, as it does not allow it to come in contact with the ground at all. It prevents mud, gravel, dirt, etc., from getting in the seam between the upper and sole, and thus protects the seam from the cutting and wearing action; and it protects the lower part of the upper and the toe from rubbing against the gravel, stones, etc.

Mr. James Robertson, of East Cambridge, Mass., has invented an improved hook for securing and controlling animals for slaughter and for other purposes. It is so constructed that the struggles of the animal to escape after being secured will only cause the device to hold with more certainty.

Mr. Ephraim S. Morton, of Plymouth, Mass., has patented an improvement in bows, which consists in making the bow in two parts and connecting these parts by a hinge joint, so that when the bow is bent the hinge is opened, and held in that position by the string.

Messrs. Robert B. and Henry H. Russell, of Orange, Tex., have patented an improved method of packing shingles, consisting in arranging them in alternate longitudinal and transverse layers, so as to create air spaces throughout the pack. The pack is secured together with two crossbars, of wood, drawn tightly upon its center by tin or sheet iron bands.

Mr. Henry A. Robertson, of Haskins, Ohio, has devised an elastic prop or bearing for carriage tops for supporting them when turned back; and the object of the improvement is to preserve the framework of the top.

An improvement in gates has been patented by Mr. George W. Addis, of Clarkston, Mich. The improvements relate to the class of gates which are fitted to roll back part way and then swing at right angles. The gate is inexpensive and durable; there is but little liability of sagging or racking, and it is easily operated.

Mr. John P. Simons, of San Francisco, Cal., has invented an improved gun-wiper, which consists of a helical spring, the fixed end attached to a metal stock that screws into the end of the ramrod. To the spring is attached the cloth forming the swab, so that when entered into the barrel the spring retracts, but at the same time exerts a continued pressure, and thus causes the swab to take up and remove all accumulations. When used as a scraper the swab is removed, and the free knife edge of the spring acts on the surface of the barrel and takes off the lead.

A tablet designed for the use of penmen, engravers, and all persons who have lettering to do, is the invention of Mr. Herbert W. Kibbe, of Utica, N. Y. It is a self-instructor in lettering. Every letter in the alphabet can be formed complete with it, and with no more skill than is required in the use of a common ruler.

Mr. Amand Van De Wiele, of Brussels, Belgium, has invented an improved combined open grate and blower. The object of this invention is to modify or increase the draught in open fire grates by a movable blower that may be lowered upon the basket of the grate or elevated out of sight by simply turning a button attached to the front of the grate.

An improved camp chair, which is so constructed that it may be readily adjusted in an erect position, or at any desired inclination, which may be so compactly folded as to require no more space than the thickness of one of its frame timbers, is the invention of Messrs. William H. Gifford and William M. Bates, of Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

An improved device for attachment to windows to serve as a guard to the window when open to prevent children from falling out through it, has been patented by Mr. Solomon Weinhandler, of New York city. It is so constructed that it will rise out of the way when not required for use.

Mr. Charles A. J. Campbell, of Brooklyn, E. D., N. Y., has patented an improved detachable shoe for horses that may be attached as a temporary substitute in case a horse casts a shoe while on the road; they may be changed in width to suit any sized foot.

Mr. George W. Swain, of Brooklyn, N. Y., has patented an improved nursery chair, adapted to be used as a high or low chair, or as a carriage. It is readily changed from one form to the other, and is complete when used as a high or low chair.

Mr. James L. McKeever, of New York city, has patented an improved bed or cot, having parallel sides and rounded ends, and in a hinged cover of wire or other netting supported by a frame which is similar in form to the frame of the bed. The object of the invention is to construct a light strong bed having a protective covering of wire netting, to be used in hospitals and sick-rooms for the protection of patients against flies and other insects. It is also intended for use as an outdoor bed in warm countries.

Mr. Amandus Getzschmann, of Omaha, Neb., has patented an improved device for stopping runaway horses, which consists of a movable sleeve sliding on two guide rails that project from the sides of the carriage or wagon pole. The sleeve is held in position by a stout hook that is pivoted in a slot in the pole, which engages in the corresponding hole in the sleeve. This hook is also provided with an eye, to which a strap is attached. This strap is led to the seat of the driver, so that he can at any moment unhook the sleeve and allow it to slide freely on the pole. Should the horses attempt to run away, the driver will pull the line, the sleeve is unhitched and slides forward, and a strap is drawn in the opposite direction, causing the bit straps to operate on the bits and bring the horses to a standstill.

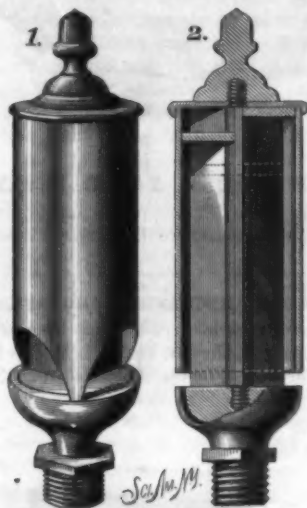
Mr. Frank Imhof, of New York city, has patented a paper box for banjos, violins, guitars, and other similar instru-

ments. The improvement consists in making the bottom and top and also the sides in separate parts, so as to avoid the trouble and difficulty of bending the sides around the edges for the whole length of the box.

Mr. Augustus B. Wood, of Fountain Hill, Ark., has patented an improved matchbox or case for carrying matches in the pocket, which is so constructed that the matches may be forced out one at a time, as required, and at the same time ignited.

#### IMPROVED STEAM WHISTLE.

The whistle shown in the accompanying engraving is divided longitudinally into three or more compartments of different lengths, each compartment being provided with an aperture for receiving steam and with the usual mouth. The object is to produce three or more sounds simultaneously. The usual way of doing this is to attach three or

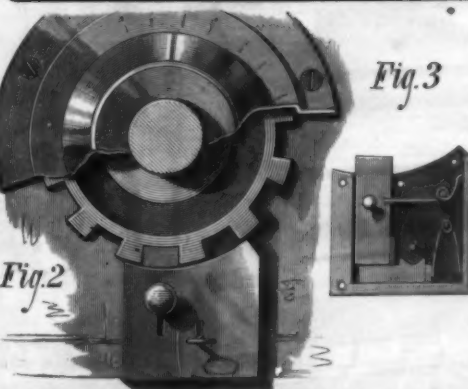
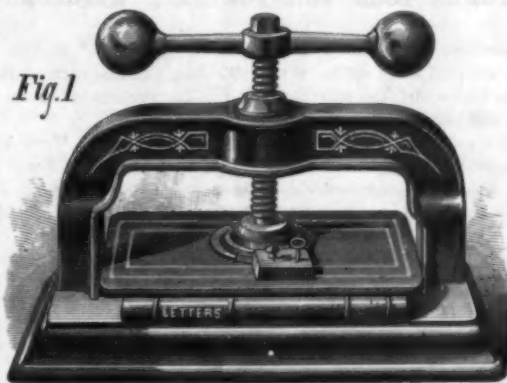


1. 2.  
EINIG'S STEAM WHISTLE.

more steam whistles to a single pipe and admit steam to them all through a single valve, but this incurs the expense of three whistles and wastes an appreciable quantity of steam. The whistle shown in the accompanying engraving costs but little if any more than one of ordinary construction. More or less than three compartments may be formed in the same shell or tube, and the whistle may be made in either of the forms shown in the engraving. This whistle was recently patented by Mr. John Einig, of Jacksonville, Fla.

#### LOCK LETTER PRESS.

The letter press represented in the engraving secures letter copy books against abstraction and the curiosity of meddlers employed in or frequenting business offices. A toothed



HILL'S PATENT LOCK LETTER PRESS.

wheel is attached to the lower end of the screw, and to the platen is secured a lock the bolt of which enters between the teeth of the wheel on the screw.

When the platen is screwed down upon the letter book and the bolt of the lock is projected into the wheel on the screw as before indicated it will be impossible to turn the screw so as to release the book. The lock is so constructed that by pressing against a knob the press will be locked without the use of a key; but to unlock it a key is required.

The details of the lock are shown in Figs. 2 and 3. The operation of the lock is as follows: The inner spring presses

the main bolt away from the gear, while the outer spring presses the supplemental bolt against the side of main bolt. When the main bolt is pressed into a recess in the toothed wheel the supplementary bolt at once springs past the end of the main bolt, and the press is locked. To unlock it, the key is inserted and the supplemental bolt is pressed away from the outer end of the main bolt, when that bolt instantly disengages itself by the action of the inner spring, and so remains unlocked until pressure is again applied to the key when it is desired to lock it.

This improvement is simple and inexpensive, and commends itself to any one having use for such an article. The patent was obtained July 9, 1878. For further information address the inventor, Mr. John Hill, of Columbus, Georgia.

#### Petroleum.

When we are told that at the present time over 1,800,000 gallons of petroleum or earth oil are brought to the surface every day in the oil regions of Pennsylvania alone, the mind is staggered by the contemplation of the magnitude of this comparatively new industry. So lavish is Mother Earth of her hidden stores of oil that it is sent to the surface much faster than it can be taken care of, or stored, and at the present time 300,000 gallons, at the lowest estimate, run to waste every day. The great United Pipe Line, and other methods of conveyance, utterly fail to convey the oil to markets, and the enormous tanks for storage are full to overflowing. There are tanks owned by companies which hold 5,000,000 barrels of oil, and all of them are full. The wooden tanks owned by individuals and private concerns amount in their aggregate capacity to as large a number of barrels, and these also are full.

Thus it will be understood that there are great lakes of oil above ground, as well as below; but there is good reason to believe that the subterranean deposits may with greater propriety be called oceans rather than lakes. The oil workers are evidently pumping from inexhaustible supplies in the rock chambers below, and what are called the "spouting wells" deliver their vast currents with the same impetuosity as when the drills first tapped the pent-up stores. An interesting inquiry arises as regards what becomes of the oil that cannot be secured; into what does it flow, and where is its final resting place? Any one who has visited the oil regions will know of the nature of the country, and readily understand that much of the oil flows into brooks or small rivers, and in time finds its way into the large rivers, and is lost ultimately in the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean. Still larger quantities are absorbed by the earth in ravines and marshy places, and thus it is lost to view. In the famous district one is led to exclaim, "Oil, oil everywhere, and no untainted water to drink." There is oil in the soil; oil in the springs; oil on the bushes and trees; oil in the atmosphere, apparently; oil on the clothing, and in the mouth, eyes, and hair of the workmen; the bread and coffee of the region have the odor of oil, and the beds are saturated with it.

How wonderful is all this! Well do we remember when the first vial of "rock oil" fell into our hands. It was called "Seneca oil," and it was claimed to be a most efficacious remedy for a variety of ills to which the human body is subject. The statement that it flowed spontaneously from a spring in Pennsylvania was received at first with much incredulity, as that was regarded as impossible; but in a short space of time the truth was known, and the oil was no longer regarded as a mixture devised by human hands.

American petroleum oil is now used as a source of artificial illumination in nearly all parts of the world. It goes along with rum, powder, and muskets to the savage tribes of Africa, and the mud houses on the banks of the rivers of the interior are illuminated by its combustion; it is found in the interior of the Turkish Empire, in Persia, in Egypt, in Palestine, in China, in Japan, and in the remote islands of the sea. For the paltry sum of fifteen cents we can purchase a gallon of the clear refined oil, and the cost of the light afforded, in comparison with gas as furnished at the lowest cost in cities, is as one to twenty in its favor. It is just now the most formidable antagonist of gas, and we can scarcely hope in the utilization of electrical force in the future, to secure light at a lower expense.—*Boston Journal of Chemistry.*

#### A 1,500 Horse Power Hoister.

The new hoisting machinery for the Yellow Jacket shaft, now being constructed in San Francisco, will be surpassed by nothing of the kind on the Comstock. It will be a double cylinder, direct acting hoist. Each engine will have a stroke of eight feet, cylinders 28 inches in diameter, and will be of a non-condensing character. They are to work at a steam pressure of 120 lb. to the square inch, and at 50 revolutions per minute will have a piston speed of 800 feet. While hoisting from a depth of 4,000 feet each will exert 1,500 horse power. A flat steel rope, 7 inches wide,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick, and 4,000 feet long, will be used in hoisting. The Union shaft is now supplied with hoisting works, and will soon be furnished with pumping machinery superior to any now in use on the Comstock. The new pumping engine will be of the compound condensing style, the initial cylinder being 64 inches in diameter, with a stroke of 7 feet. The expansion cylinder is 100 inches in diameter and 8 feet stroke. It will have 8 strokes a minute and 136 feet of piston speed in the same time, and will exert about 1,500 horse power. It will operate a double line of 14 inch pumps, having a stroke of 10 feet.—*Virginia Enterprise.*



**NOVEL WORK TABLE IMPLEMENT.**

In the novel combination shown in the accompanying engraving the body of the implement, which represents a walking turtle, forms a paper weight. It is hollow and contains a spring acted drum upon which is wound a tape measure of three or more feet in length. The end of the measure extends through the mouth of the turtle, and is provided with the usual ring. Upon the back of the turtle there is a pin cushion, and just above the base of the tail there is a very hard beveled piece of steel, against which knives and scissors may be drawn to sharpen them. In the end of the tail there is a hardened steel wheel that is used as a glass cutter.

This combination of devices was recently patented in the United States and Canada by Mr. E. S. Heath, of Clintonville, Pa. It is one of those little articles that will be found useful in every household.

**IMPROVED PORTABLE RAILROAD LOCK.**

The portable railroad shown in the accompanying engraving is made in sections ten feet long; the two rails being firmly connected together by the iron which is riveted to the rails. The sections thus formed are very light and yet strong and durable and capable of adapting itself to any surface. It may be used in hilly countries as well as upon flat lands.

The principal feature in this railroad is the locking device which secures the ends of the rails. As will be observed by reference to the engraving, it consists of a pointed piece of iron attached to one end of the rail and projecting a short distance beyond the rail end, so that it may be received by a mortise formed between a piece of iron attached to the end of the adjacent rail and offset, as shown in the engraving.

This lock holds the ends of the rails firmly, and at the same time admits of easily breaking the connections to insert a curve or a switch at any point without disturbing the whole road. For sugar plantations, mines, and quarries a road of this kind is invaluable; it is fast superseding cattle and carts, being much more economical.

Further information may be obtained from the patentee, Mr. John Turl, Turl's Iron Works, foot of West 28th street, New York.

**The Coal Crop.**

In 1877 the anthracite regions of Pennsylvania yielded 21,000,000 tons, and although in 1878 the demand was curtailed to 17,000,000 tons, it is expected that close upon 30,000,000 tons will be required this year. Up to date 12,750,000 tons have been mined, against 7,300,000 tons for the corresponding period last year. The full average production is estimated at 500,000 tons a week, and it has reached on one occasion 655,000 tons. For the week ending July 13 the production was 531,613 tons, against 239,613 tons for the corresponding week of last year.

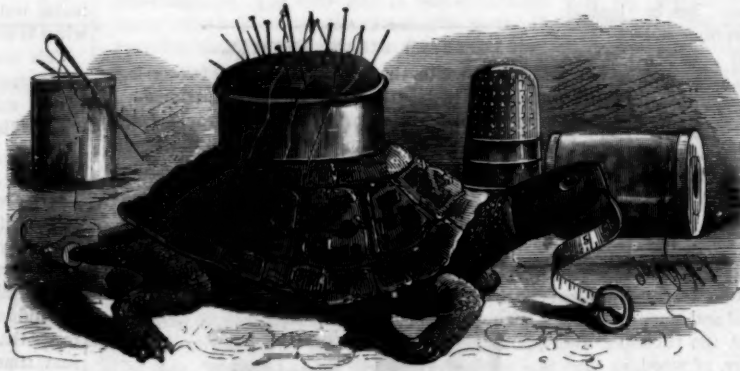
**IMPROVED STRAW CUTTER.**

We give herewith an engraving of a straw cutter invented by Mr. Charles G. Biedinger, of San Francisco, Cal., which possesses considerable novelty.

The cylinders carrying the cutters are geared together so that they revolve in opposite directions; each cylinder carries two knives, B, of peculiar form, arranged longitudinally and parallel with the shaft. The knives are concaved in the direction of their length, and the faces of the upper knives, which are straight, meet at every revolution the faces of the lower knives—which are rounded off toward the edge—so that the upper and lower knives may be said to roll together like the teeth of a gear wheel. As they come together the sliding of one over the other makes a shear that cuts whatever comes between easily and cleanly. These knives also draw forward the feed a certain distance at each revolution. When a longer feed is required than can be obtained by the knives alone, the rubber strips, A, are placed between the knives, and opposite each other, so that as the machine revolves a greater length of hay or straw will be drawn through. The knives being concaved lengthwise, the shearing cut will be from the ends of the cutters toward the center of the machine, conforming to the natural arrangement of the straw as it passes through the machine, the straw being thickest in the middle.

A good idea of the form of the knives and the arrangement of the rubber strips may be formed from the engravings, Fig. 1 being a perspective view and Fig. 2 a transverse section through the cutter heads.

Further information may be obtained by addressing

**HEATH'S WORK TABLE IMPLEMENT.**

the inventor, at 28 Sansome street, San Francisco, California.

**RECENT MECHANICAL INVENTIONS.**

An improved horseshoe machine has been patented by Mr. David H. Hatlee, of Clifton Park, N. Y. In letters patent granted to the same inventor, August 6, 1878, No. 206,726, a

An improved tire setter and fastener has been patented by Mr. David Fairbanks, of Rockingham, Vt. It is well known that a majority of blacksmiths cannot measure and weld a tire without making mistakes in its length of from one eighth to one fourth of an inch, and commonly they have to make several trials before succeeding in making a proper fit. The object of this invention is to insure perfect accuracy, to fit and tighten the tire at little expense, and in a manner which shall preclude all possibility of a mistake or misfit.

Mr. Frank A. Bowen, of Putnam, Conn., has invented an improved stripper spring for carding engines, which consists in combining a socket, base, sleeve, and rubber spring for receiving the impact of the flat. In carding machines at present the flat, when it is raised, bears against two steel springs attached to the crossbar; but these springs frequently break, causing loss of time, and sometimes tear the clothing of the cards. This invention is intended to remedy these defects, and to furnish a steadier and better spring for the purpose.

Mr. George William Schaefer, of St. Louis, Mo., has invented an improved machine for paring horses' hoofs, by which the hoofs may be pared with safety and with greater ease to the operator than when the paring is done in the usual way. It leaves the hoof level, so that no burning will be required to get a firm seat for the shoe.

An improvement in running gears for wagons has been patented by Mr. Joseph C. Fowler, of Arcola, Texas, in which the inventor makes use of a ball-and-socket coupling device applied back of the front axle, so that the forward axle is not weakened by boring to insert a king bolt, and the vehicle may be turned shorter and with less strain than when the joint is in line with the axle.

An improvement in looms has been patented by Mr. Paul W. Green, of Philadelphia, Pa. It consists of a box adapted to fit over the rods on which the picker moves, and to receive the elliptical rubber springs or cushions having at one end a solid bottom and at the opposite end, adjacent to the heads in which the rods are held, a movable bottom adapted to slide within it, and a spindle supporting bracket of a construction to permit the necessary movement of the bottom. The springs are held between the two bottoms, and the box slips over the movable bottom when struck by the picker.

Mr. Benjamin N. Shelley, of Anderson, Ind., has patented an improved carriage axle and axle box, which consists, mainly, in combining a shaft having one or more grooves around it with a packing and two clamping nuts or washers arranged upon opposite sides of said packing, so that when said washers or nuts are drawn together they force the packing down into the groove in the shaft and form a flange or collar fitting in the groove, that both prevents the escape of oil and serves to hold the shaft and bearing against longitudinal movement.

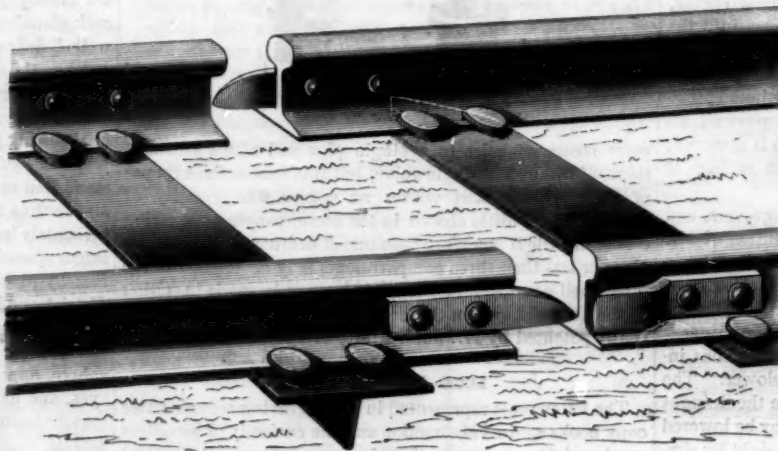
An improved machine for making paper boxes from pulp has been patented by Mr. Peter Cook, of Mattapan, Mass. It is so constructed that the formers may be cleaned immediately after being used and without stopping the machine.

It will make the boxes rapidly and of uniform thickness, and will allow any kind of stock and chemicals to be used.

Mr. R. S. Munger, of Mexia, Texas, has patented an improved cotton gin saw cleaner, having a series of slotted knives or scrapers of peculiar shape, adjustably attached to a movable revolving support, and adapted to be thrust against the saws when cleaning is to be done.

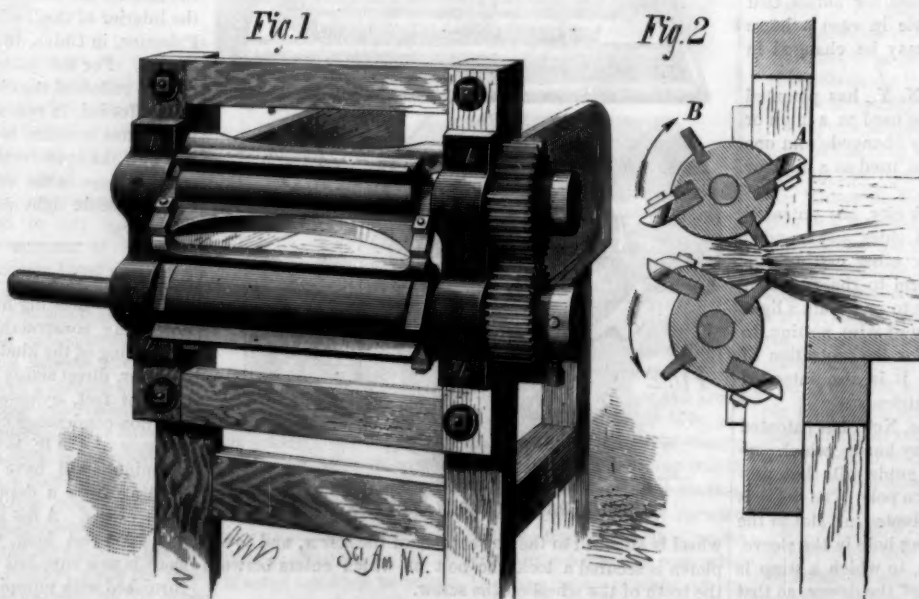
An improved machine for printing paper hangings has been patented by Mr. Jacob J. Janeway, of New Brunswick, N. J. It is so constructed that the ground color and the other colors may be applied to the paper while passing once through the machine. It is simple and effective.

Mr. C. G. Damaschky, of Brooklyn, N. Y., has invented an improved station indicator, consisting in a revolving wheel fitted with radial indicating cards that are capable of radial movement, combined with a supporting frame that retains the cards inward, and is slotted for permitting the under card to drop by gravity to a position where it may be seen; also in sliding tongues and pawls for raising the cards and turning the wheel for bringing any one into position.

**TURL'S LOCK FOR PORTABLE RAILROADS.**

machine for making horseshoes is described. It has a horizontal bed that has a movable portion, and carries dies around which the shoe is formed. The present invention is an improvement on the former patent.

Mr. Charles W. Cannon, of Helena, Montana Ter., has patented an improved combination tool designed for use in preparing giant powder and other powder cartridges, so as to avoid the necessity of having to use a number of tools

**BIEDINGER'S STRAW CUTTER.**

for this purpose. It consists in a combination tool formed of the handles pivoted to each other, and having a tack puller and a screwdriver formed upon their ends, the curved jaws having half round notches formed in their edges, and the blades or cutters attached to their sides.



## THE FLYING DRAGON.

This beautiful little animal has, according to the measurements made by Cantor, a length of not more than eight inches, of which four and three-fourths inches belong to the long, slim tail. The nostrils are on the side and are directed upward, and the tympanum is not covered. The male animal has a neck comb, and both sexes have a small lump back of the eyes. Small scales of about equal size cover the body, and larger ones cover the sides. As in all dragons the color varies considerably, not only in different parts of the body, but also in one and the same scale. Their beauty is beyond all description. The head of the living animal is of a metallic brown or green color, and is ornamented with a black spot between the eyes. The back and the inner half of the wing consist of a mixture of metallic dark-brown and pink, in some cases in alternating stripes, with numerous black spots and curiously wound lines. The color of the outer half of the wing varies between orange yellow and pink red, and has numerous irregular black spots and a silver edge. The members and the tail are covered with alternating stripes of pink and brown, and the eyelids are covered with radiating black lines. The neck is very light yellow, and the breast is of the same color covered with black spots. The flying dragon is found on the Sunda Islands, in Penang, and Singapore. Like other dragons it lives in trees entirely, and probably never comes to the earth unless forced to do so. Lacépède says that it is able to climb, walk, fly, and swim, but no proof of this assertion has been given. They generally rest on the tops of the trees, watching for insects, and as soon as they spy one they will leap for it, descending to the bough below; for although they can fly through the air in descending, they are not able to rise by means of their wings.

The female lays three or four yellowish white eggs, of about three eighths of an inch in length, which it is said they deposit in the holes in the bark of the trees. No further details are known.

## The Insect Enemies of Books.

Dr. H. A. Hagen, according to the *Science News*, has recently made the insect pests of libraries the subject of an interesting lecture. Dr. Hagen admits the important fact that the white ant is present in Cambridge, and "everywhere else in the United States," and furthermore, that there have been two instances in this country of this insect causing a great destruction of books. Fourteen years ago, at Springfield, Ill., the bound copies of State papers were put aside in a room of the State House, which was not opened for a considerable period. When it was examined every book was found to have been more or less mutilated by ants. A Boston lady, a teacher in one of the Freedmen's schools in South Carolina, had even a more striking evidence of the destructive power of the insect. During the lady's absence from the school, in a vacation of six weeks, the ants ate through an entire library. A few of the least damaged specimens were saved as curiosities of literature and sent to Dr. Hagen. The volumes devoured were chiefly Bibles and prayer books.

The white ant is an uncertain danger. It may suddenly spring into activity and destructiveness, as it did here in the instance mentioned; as it did in France, where it all at once became formidable; or as it always does in Mexico, where old books and manuscripts are consequently rare. On the other hand, it may reserve its power for use in our native forests indefinitely, until some more tempting fare is provided by books locked up and not in use. Such books, however, are frequently of great value, and their bindings may be costly.

The other insect pests most known are the beetles belonging to the family *Ptinidae*, and of these the larvæ of the genus *anobium* constitute the true "book worm." The ordinary methods used for destroying these may prove also injurious to the finer kinds of binding. Dr. Hagen suggests, as a beetle remedy, that the volumes be placed under the bell of an air pump and kept for a short time in the vacuum produced by the withdrawal of the air therefrom.

Dr. Hagen dismisses the cockroach (*Blatta orientalis*) with the remark that "libraries will not often be stored in cellars."

In regard to the more recently imported ally of this species, the "croton bug" (*Ectobia germanica*), the editor of the *Science News* remarks that it is capable of doing damage upstairs as well as down. He says: "We have before us a volume, originally possessed of a bright red binding, which now has a speckled cover of white and brown blotches. The croton bugs ate off the red color almost wholly, and in some places penetrated a darker color, which seems to have been under the red. Probably the glue or the oil in the pigment of the binding proved attractive. The book lay outside, on a desk in an editorial 'sanctum,' far removed from the cellar, and was in occasional use during the period of its disfigurement. This instance does not stand alone; we have seen books that had been similarly attacked on the back, while standing on the shelves of libraries."

Before leaving this subject we may state that an interest-

THE FLYING DRAGON.—(*Draco volans*.)

ing illustrated article, written for the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, on the subject of the various insects that are known to destroy books, may be found in our SUPPLEMENT, No. 138.

## A Humming Bird's Nest.

Recently a humming bird's nest was found by some persons who had sufficient natural curiosity to overcome their compassion, and who captured the nest, two young hummers and the old one, took them home and had them stuffed. They are to be sent to a museum of natural curiosities in London. The nest is built on a little twig, and scarcely the size of half an English walnut. Both nest and twig are covered with little patches of lichen until it is almost impossible to tell one from the other, and the nest looks like a kind of natural excrescence on the twig. The nest is pliable, like a tiny cup of velvet, and the inside is lined with a white substance, as rich and soft as white silk. The little birds are about the size of bumble bees, very pretty, and they sit on a little perch just outside the nest, with open bills, while the old bird hovers over them to feed them.—*Elizabeth (N. J.) Journal*.

## The Chemistry and Physiology of Aquaria.

An interesting and valuable paper has recently been written by Dr. W. Hinds on this subject; and, as the *Gardener's Chronicle* says, is deserving of wider acquaintance among physiologists than will probably be secured for it in the journal in which it appeared (*Birmingham Medical Review*). The author first alludes to the ideas prevalent as to the importance of purifying the water of aquaria; one being that a balance must be preserved between water plants and the animals, that the former may utilize the carbon dioxide expired by the latter. Another opinion considers that the chief means of aerating the water must be effected by agitation, which is only supplemented by the assimilating process of plants. Dr. Hinds proposes to examine into the questions: 1. The time required for water to redissolve or take up air after exhaustion; 2. The ultimate destruction of carbonic

acid dissolved in water at ordinary pressure and temperature. 3. The relation of the law of atmospheric mutual diffusion of gases to the air taken up by water. By a series of interesting experiments he shows that carbon dioxide, instead of accumulating in the water, is continually being got rid of by its escaping from the water into the air. A jar holding about half a liter of tap water had six small fishes placed in it. They became exhausted in four hours, but the water then gave no trace of carbon dioxide. He found also that this same water regained its normal 2.5 per cent of air on exposure for four hours. A jar one foot deep and six inches in diameter, charged with carbonic dioxide, left in a close room, with gas burning, etc., so as to render it as unfavorable as possible, required seventy hours to liberate itself of the gas; while the same jar lost it in twenty minutes under the constant agitation of pouring it backward and forward from one vessel to another. The higher the temperature the more rapidly does the gas escape, nearly twice the length of time being required on a cold snowy day.

Dr. Hinds finally comes to the conclusion that the law of the mutual diffusion of gases hitherto applied to gases in air holds true as well for gases dissolved in water. The practical conclusion is, that no trouble need be taken about freeing an aquarium of carbon dioxide, but only as to resupplying it with air; and to do this he suggests jets of air (not water) in a minute state of division, combined with extensive and slow contact, as being more effective than the method now adopted in large public aquaria. Dr. Hinds' results seem parallel in a remarkable way to the conclusion of Schloßing as to the diffusion of ammonia. That physiologist regards the tropical seas as the great reservoir of ammonia, brought down from the continents by large rivers. The sea parts with its ammonia to the air at the high tropical temperature; but when it circulates and arrives at temperate regions, the air being cooled parts with it to the rain, which brings it to the earth. One still desires to know why oxygen should be absorbed at all, and why carbon dioxide is liberated by water; but the facts are obviously of vital

importance as far as the maintenance of aquatic animal life is concerned.

## The Best Kind of Silkworm to Rear.

According to the *Zoologist*, Dr. Wallace (a well known authority on the silkworm) remarked at a recent meeting of the London Entomological Society that he had experimented with nearly every kind of silkworm which had been introduced into Europe, and that he had come to the conclusion that the only one which would pay to cultivate in England was the *Bombyx mori*. It was true that the alantus moth and others would produce a silk; but inasmuch as manufacturers, brokers, and silk merchants had invested large sums in the produce of *B. mori* they were not disposed to look with an eye of favor upon any other produce, which certainly would require much alteration in machinery and in the arrangements for business now extant. Moreover, the product of *B. mori* was a very superior article to that produced by any other worm.

It was true that in India, China, and elsewhere native products were prepared from the cocoons of indigenous moths, as, for instance, the Tusser silks from *Antheraea pernyi*;



The 16 specimens of butyric alcohol,  $C_4H_{10}O_2$ , whose densities have been determined by different chemists, may be







# RECENT DECISIONS RELATING TO PATENTS, TRADE MARKS, ETC.

By the U. S. Circuit Court.—Eastern District of Missouri.

## MANUFACTURE OF ENAMELED IRON WARE.—ST. LOUIS STAMPING COMPANY vs. QUINBY *et al.*

1. Where the original patent described a process of enameling iron, the gist of which consisted in a certain preparation of the iron and the application of any well known enameling mixture, it was not at variance nor incompatible with the invention described to insert in the reissue of such patent a formula as to an enameling mixture which could work out the result.

2. If the specification contains such a description as will enable one skilled in the art to accomplish the desired result, it is sufficient without attempting to speculate as to the philosophy of its action.

3. The testimony of a witness as to prior use by him of the invention patented is rendered unreliable and incompetent by the circumstance that his employers, after having the benefit of his skill, sought the right to use the patented process as soon as they heard of it; and the further fact that the specimens produced were very different from those made under the patent.

4. Reissued Letters Patent No. 7,779, granted July 3, 1877, to F. G. & W. F. Niedringhaus, for improvement in the manufacture of enameled iron ware, are for the same invention as the original patent and valid.

The St. Louis Stamping Company is the assignee of reissued Letters Patent No. 7,779, granted to Frederick G. & William F. Niedringhaus, July 3, 1877, for "Improvement in the manufacture of enameled iron ware."

The claims in the original patent are as follows:

1. The herein described process of enameling iron ware by oxidizing the iron during the process of the drying of the glaze, substantially as set forth.

That phraseology is not changed in the reissued patent.

The second claim is:

A new manufacture of enamel sheet iron ware, enameled substantially as described.

In the reissue the phraseology is:

As a new manufacture, mottled enameled sheet iron ware having the oxidized base fused with the surface glaze.

By the Commissioner of Patents.

## TRADE MARK.—EX PARTE THE SAFETY POWDER COMPANY.

The term "safety," applied to powder, fuse lighters, and explosive caps, naturally suggests that these explosives may be used with comparative safety, and is therefore descriptive, and is not registrable as a trade mark.

## TRADE MARK.—EX PARTE THOMPSON, DERRY & CO.

The word "swing," when applied to the socket of a scythe stath which moves on a pivot, each point describing the arc of a circle, and is made fast in different positions, indicates the peculiarity of the socket with sufficient precision to be descriptive, and cannot be registered as a trade mark.

## WHEEL FLOWS.—LAPHAM vs. BETTENDORF.

Under Rules 7 and 57 the party to an interference who first files a completed application, including petition, specification, oath, drawings, model or specimens (when required), and first fee, is deemed to be the first inventor, in the absence of all proof to the contrary, and the testimony of the other parties is to be taken first.

## LUBRICATOR PATENT OF NICHOLAS SEIBERT.—APPLICATION FOR REISSUE.

1. The machine for which Letters Patent No. 94,790 were granted September 14, 1860, to Nicholas Seibert, in the form in which he constructed it, necessarily involved the use of hydrostatic pressure as a force for the expulsion of the lubricant from the lubricating cylinder; but it was designed to be a steam lubricator, and the presence of hydrostatic pressure in the device, as an operative force, was not known or suspected by Seibert until after he had obtained his patent.

2. As he who, by a lucky accident, discovers a new art, is, under the law, as much entitled to a patent as he who, by an effort of genius, invents a new machine, however inferior in merit his work may be, so, also, is he who invents a machine which accomplishes its object entitled to a patent for it, whether he does or does not correctly understand the law or philosophy of its operation.

3. Seibert's lubricator, which was operated by hydrostatic as well as by steam pressure, was his invention, although he did not fully understand the law of its operation; and he is entitled to a patent for this particular machine, whether it operates as a steam lubricator, or as a hydrostatic lubricator, or as both combined.

By the Acting Commissioner of Patents.

## MACHINE FOR CLEANING SILK THREAD.—TAYLOR vs. MARTIN.

When the evidence in an interference develops the fact that the contesting parties are not independent inventors, but jointly devised the invention, judgment of priority cannot be had in favor of either party, but the interference will be dissolved.

## SHADE HOLDER FOR LAMP.—MARSHALL vs. FISH *et al.*

1. Certain motions to strike out, not the final judgments of the Examiner of Interferences and the Examiner-in-Chief, but the views properly expressed by those tribunals in arriving at such judgments, denied.

2. The sole purpose of section 4,904 Revised Statutes being to enable the Commissioner to determine, by a proceed-

ing known as an interference, whether he will grant a patent to an applicant, notwithstanding a patent for the same invention has been previously issued, or to which one of two or more contending applicants a patent shall issue, the question of priority between two or more patentees who may be parties to the proceeding need not and cannot be determined, after judgment therein has been rendered against the applicants who acquiesce in such judgment.

## APPLICATION FOR REFRIGERATOR PATENT.—BATES.

1. A machine and a product, a process and a composition, an art and an article, and a "method and the means," each constitute distinct patentable subject matter, and but one of them can be the subject of a single claim.

2. Where the improvement made consists of an apparatus, it alone should be claimed, and not its functions, nor should the apparatus be claimed as "means" for accomplishing the result.

## APPLICATION FOR A DESIGN PATENT FOR SPOON HANDLE.—BEATTIE.

More than one separate and independent design cannot be claimed in the same application; but, where the design is an entirety, a claim for the entire design, as well as claims for sub-combinations of the parts, is allowable.

## The Mysterious in Boiler Explosions.

There is beyond question an element of mystery attending certain boiler explosions. At one time all explosions of boilers, save those which obviously resulted from shortness of water or extensive corrosion of plates, were regarded as mysterious and remarkable. Theories have been formed almost without number to account for their occurrence—in a word, to solve the mystery. The spheroidal theory of Boutigny d'Evreux may be cited as an example. When water is dropped on a hot plate it assumes the spheroidal condition, runs about in drops, and evaporates slowly. The drops are really not in contact with the plate at the time, each drop being enveloped in an atmosphere of its own vapor. When the plate cools the water touches it and flashes into steam. It was supposed that under certain circumstances water assumed the spheroidal condition in normal steam generators, and that a great development of steam ensued when the furnace plates cooled a little; so much steam being made thus in a few seconds that the boiler burst. This idea is now well known to be fallacious.

Another theory was that if a boiler was heated red hot and cold water pumped in it would infallibly explode; this is obviously the tail end of the spheroidal theory. Inasmuch as the specific heat of iron is but one ninth that of water, in round numbers it follows that nine pounds of iron heated to about 1,500° must give up their heat to make one pound of steam; and it has never yet been shown how enough red hot iron could be present in a boiler to cause a development of steam with which the safety valve could not deal. Many experiments have been carried out to test the point, with negative results as far as explosions are concerned.

The electrical theory was broached. What this meant we never understood, nor did we ever meet any one who did. One gentleman promised to prevent all explosions from this cause by incasing every boiler in thin sheet copper. Another proposed to fit conducting wires to put boilers in communication with the earth. The notion that water was decomposed into oxygen and hydrogen, and subsequently recombined with a terrible explosion, kept its ground for a long time. We believe we may say that no engineer possessing a moderate knowledge of chemistry holds such a theory now. The inspecting engineers of the various boiler insurance and assurance companies were the first to place the whole subject on a sound footing. They showed as a result of their experience that boilers burst because they were too weak to withstand the strains brought on them by the internal pressure. They proved that in the vast majority of cases furrowing, and grooving, and corrosion in all their multifarious forms, were the agents operating to bring about boiler explosions, and they carried back such catastrophes from the regions of romance to those of everyday life. There is some reason, however, to fear that these gentlemen have gone a little too far; and that by assigning all boiler explosions to one cause they are doing harm and stopping inquiry into certain secrets of nature about which we do not know quite so much as is desirable.

That by far the larger number of explosions which occur every year in England are due to weakness of the boilers which give way, either congenital or acquired, we should be the last to dispute. But it is equally indisputable that events take place now and then which quite upset all conclusions based on the idea that explosions always take place because a boiler is too weak to withstand normal strains, and these said events apparently contradict much that sound scientific authorities teach. Thus, for example, although the entrance of cold water into a red hot boiler ought not to cause an explosion, yet there is one case at least on record in which, on a pall of cold water being poured suddenly into a red hot kitchen boiler, a most violent and disastrous explosion took place. The weight of metal engaged here was, however, very great as compared with that of the water. It is also shown that explosions have ensued when water was pumped into plain cylindrical externally fired boilers, which had been allowed to run short.

On the other hand, boilers patched and re-patched, and seemingly worthless, have by the hundred done their duty for years without a catastrophe, while boilers as well made as possible, and in excellent condition—nearly new in fact—

have exploded with disastrous results. So long as furrowing and corrosion are present it is easy to account for the failure of a boiler. It is when explosions of strong boilers occur that inspectors are at fault, differences of opinion arise, and we become enveloped in an atmosphere of mystery out of which it is difficult to find the path which leads to certainty. Two notable examples of this have been recently recorded in our columns: one is the Coltness explosion, when six boilers out of ten flew away at once like a covey of birds; the other is the Kersley explosion, when one boiler out of eight burst, leaving the rest intact.

As regards the Coltness explosion, that, as is well known, has been explained by Mr. Fletcher on the theory that one boiler which exploded first had the steam pipe plugged up, and consequently gave way from a sheer accumulation of pressure. We cannot find that one tittle of definite evidence was adduced to show that any such plugging took place. Mr. Fletcher is, no doubt, satisfied on this point, but we are not. In fact his theory is based on pure assumption. But, granting that he was right, how are we to account for the explosion of the remaining five boilers? One explanation is that the boilers were bedded so close that they rested against each other, and that each boiler as it gave way staved in the side of the next one to it. To make this an intelligible cause of explosion, it must be assumed that the sudden reduction of pressure on the outrush of steam through the side of the broken boiler caused so large a portion of the contained water to flash into steam that the boiler flew into pieces before the steam so produced could escape. But it is well known that the Coltness boilers were strong enough to stand a pressure of 300 pounds on the square inch, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to see how steam of any pressure like this could be produced. Only as much water would be converted into steam as would suffice to restore the pressure in the boiler to something less than what it was before the rent took place. To assume anything else is also to assume that once the process of flashing is established it will go on regardless of the pressure set up. This is a very important assumption; nay, more, it is a complete begging of the question. If it can be shown conclusively that the stored-up energy in a boiler can all be expended in flashing water into steam, if flashing is once fairly set up, without any consideration for the accumulation of that pressure which is inimical to the operation of the flashing function, then we are face to face with a new physical law which would clear away much mystery, and set boiler explosions, like that at Coltness, in a totally new light. It is a notorious fact that a great many explosions take place just when an engine is started. If we may assume that the sudden reduction of pressure sets up flashing, and that the process is continued by, if we may use the words, its own *vis viva*, then it is easy to understand why a sudden reduction in pressure may cause an explosion; but until some definite statement of facts is available, we must hold this idea to be pure, little supported, theory, and nothing else. If we are asked, how, if we reject the theories of Mr. Fletcher and others, we explain the Coltness explosion, we reply that we cannot explain it, because there is not sufficient evidence available on which to base an opinion.

In the Kersley explosion we have a boiler, insured, carefully looked after, and apparently sound, going to pieces without having given warning in the way of leakage. Here again we find boiler inspectors dealing largely in pure assumption. Mr. Hiller, the engineer of the National Insurance Company, took it for granted that an elbow pipe was broken off and let the water run out. But there is not a scrap of evidence that a cast iron pipe was broken as supposed. Mr. Baldwin, another boiler inspecting engineer, holds that Mr. Hiller is quite wrong, and that the boiler burst because the plates had become weakened by age; that they had "lost their nature," to use a word well known among iron makers. But even Mr. Baldwin finds all the plates he tested so strong that the boiler should have withstood on the lowest calculation double the pressure at which it was worked. It is to be presumed that the inspecting engineers of boiler insurance companies are the greatest authorities in existence on all that pertains to the life and death of steam generators. When we find any one of these gentlemen unable to form any opinion concerning certain catastrophes, which is not flatly contradicted by a professional brother, it would be folly to deny that there are mysterious boiler explosions—that is to say, explosions which occur from some cause or causes unascertainable. That we shall always remain in our present ignorance is very improbable. But we venture to think that the solution of our difficulties will come, not from the boilermaker or the engineer, but from an elaborate process of physical research into the laws which govern the generation and evolution from heated liquids of their steams or vapors. Many suggestive phenomena have been recorded which might serve to direct an inquirer. For example, the behavior of water heated under oil is, as shown by Dr. Frost many years ago, very curious and suggestive. Again, water may have its boiling point altered by various conditions other than those of pressure. It is not too much to say that although the more prominent aspects of evaporation and ebullition have been carefully studied, a great deal remains to be learned concerning the real nature of processes about which men speak all the more glibly the less they really know.—*The Engineer.*

Among the novel applications of glass is the invention of Hamilton L. Bucknill, of England, who has recently patented in this country a railway sleeper made of cast glass.



## Business and Personal.

The Charge for Insertion under this head is One Dollar a line for each insertion; about eight words to a line. Advertisements must be received at publication office as early as Thursday morning to appear in next issue.

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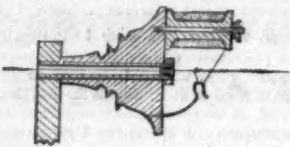
Linen Hose.—Sizes: 1½ in., 2 in., 2½ in., 3 in., 3½ in., 4 in., 5 in., 6 in., 8 in., 10 in., 12 in., 14 in., 16 in., 18 in., 20 in., 22 in., 24 in., 26 in., 28 in., 30 in., 32 in., 34 in., 36 in., 38 in., 40 in., 42 in., 44 in., 46 in., 48 in., 50 in., 52 in., 54 in., 56 in., 58 in., 60 in., 62 in., 64 in., 66 in., 68 in., 70 in., 72 in., 74 in., 76 in., 78 in., 80 in., 82 in., 84 in., 86 in., 88 in., 90 in., 92 in., 94 in., 96 in., 98 in., 100 in., 102 in., 104 in., 106 in., 108 in., 110 in., 112 in., 114 in., 116 in., 118 in., 120 in., 122 in., 124 in., 126 in., 128 in., 130 in., 132 in., 134 in., 136 in., 138 in., 140 in., 142 in., 144 in., 146 in., 148 in., 150 in., 152 in., 154 in., 156 in., 158 in., 160 in., 162 in., 164 in., 166 in., 168 in., 170 in., 172 in., 174 in., 176 in., 178 in., 180 in., 182 in., 184 in., 186 in., 188 in., 190 in., 192 in., 194 in., 196 in., 198 in., 200 in., 202 in., 204 in., 206 in., 208 in., 210 in., 212 in., 214 in., 216 in., 218 in., 220 in., 222 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(19) R. K. writes: I am about building a screw propeller launch, 35 feet long and 5 feet beam, to be run by an engine with cylinder 2x5 inches. About how many miles an hour, with 150 lb. of steam on, would she run, with a 3-16 inch steel boiler, size 20x35 inches? A. If boat has good model, probably 4½ or 5 miles per hour. 2. Where and at what price could I get a complete description of the electro-magnetic engine? A. The back numbers of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN and SUPPLEMENT contain all of the recent information on this subject. 3. What is the cost of running a magnetic engine as compared with a steam engine of the same power? A. The cost of running a magnetic engine is about 50 times as great as steam. 4. About what is the price of a six horse power magnetic engine? A. We think there are no engines in market of that size.

(20) D. L. M. writes: In a fire engine at work, throwing water through 300 feet of hose with an inch nozzle, where is the greatest pressure of water: as it leaves the engine, or at the inch hole at the end of the nozzle? A. At the pump.

(21) J. F.—A simple device for covering wire is shown in the annexed engraving. A ¾ tube



having a smooth exterior is screwed into a wooden standard, and supports a wooden pulley that carries a spool containing the silk or cotton with which the wire is wrapped. The thread passes from the spool through the small wire guide hook, thence to the wire to be covered, which is drawn slowly through the tube as the pulley revolves. The pulley may be turned by connection with a lathe, or it may be driven by a belt from the driving wheel of a sewing machine. The wire being covered may be drawn through the machine by hand, or a reel may be easily attached and arranged to take motion from the pulley.

(22) W. P. asks: 1. If a sulky or gig is being run around a course or a circle, with a horse hitched to the same, which way will it upset, or which way is it liable to upset; towards the center of ring or the outside? A. Toward the outside. 2. If a locomotive is running around a sharp curve, do not the driving wheels on the inside of curve have to slip on the rail? A. One or both wheels must slip. 3. What will I put on common paper to make impression paper for transferring patterns on wood? A. See p. 263 (23), Vol. 40, of SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

(23) F. R. R. writes: 1. In the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN of August 9, page 91, communication (10), H. W. F. describes a cheap battery. I wish to ask: 1. What is the battery fluid? A. 2 parts of bichromate of potash dissolved in 30 parts of hot water. When cold add 1 part of sulphuric acid. 2. Where can the gas carbon be obtained, and how prepared? A. It is obtained from the retorts of gas works. It may be chipped or sawed into shape, but it is usually pulverized, mixed with soft coal dust, and calcined in iron moulds. Plates of this kind may be had from any dealer in electrical supplies. 3. Can it be made from lampblack? A. No. 4. Is the amalgamated zinc the same as that commonly used in plumbing, roofing, etc.? A. No, it is not as pure as it should be; however, it may answer your purpose.

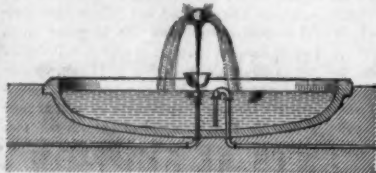
(24) R. W. D. asks: 1. What chemical should I use to saturate paper to be used on a chemical telegraph? A. Nitrate ammonia, 2 lb.; muriate ammonia, 2 lb.; ferri-cyan, potassium, 1 ounce; water, 1 gallon. 2. Also, is there sufficient resistance in above paper to keep current from passing through it? A. No; the current must pass to make the mark. 3. How can I gild iron to resemble brass, inexpensively? A. Clean the iron by scouring, and rub it with sawdust slightly moistened with a dilute acid solution of copper sulphate. Rinse, dry, and lacquer if necessary. 4. What is the resistance of one mile of No. 14 galvanized iron wire? A. 51 ohms.

(25) C. C. H. asks how to arrange connections on a telephone line having three telephones and using electric alarm bells as calls. A. Use single stroke bells on a closed circuit. Have a switch to throw the bell out, and the telephone into the circuit after the alarm.

(26) C. A., Jr., asks: 1. Is there any particular rule for cutting threads with simple or compound gearing, given only the number of threads in feed screw; if so, what are they? A.  $T \cdot S = N$ ;  $\frac{t}{T} = \frac{S}{N}$ .  $T$  representing the number of teeth in traverse screw wheel;  $S$  number in stud wheel gearing in mandrel;  $t$  number in wheel upon gear, and  $N$  number in gear upon stud pinion, gearing in T;  $N$  number of threads per inch upon traverse screw;  $N$  number to be cut. 2. We have for one engine two horizontal boilers and one steam drum. What is the gain by having a safety valve on each boiler and one on the drum? Why couldn't we do with only the one on the steam drum? A. If there are shut off valves to your boilers, you should, for safety, have a safety valve to each boiler; none is necessary to the drum if the communication to the boilers is free. 3. How do you find the horse power of an engine? A. See p. 267 (4), Vol. 40, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

(27) A. K. asks: What is the greatest altitude yet reached by a railroad? A. Some railway memoranda lately published in Germany give the highest points yet reached by existing railways passing over mountain ranges or through mountain passes. The Apennine line reaches a height of 2,024 feet; the Black Forest line, 2,789 feet; the Semmering, 2,930 feet; the Caucasian line, 3,196 feet; the St. Gothard (tunnel), 3,786 feet; the Brenner, 4,475 feet; Mont Cenis (tunnel), 4,300 feet; the North Pacific, 5,480 feet; the Central Pacific, 7,081 feet; the Union Pacific, 8,573 feet; while a railway over the Andes climbs to 15,646 feet.

(28) J. W. W. writes: I inclose you section of small fountain reservoir, with (I think) a novel automatic siphon. We built two small fountains in a portion of the yard where the inmates have access to them, and fearing the overflow pipe would be tampered with, I put in a siphon overflow as shown in the cut.



It answers two purposes, acting as a positive overflow, and, when it is desirable to clean the basin, the entire body of water can be siphoned out by putting a small wood plug in the air hole at the bend. This device has been working about two months under a variable pressure of water, and the water line never gets above the return elbow, or below the bottom of air hole.

(29) E. H. M. asks how to obtain crystals of bismuth. A. This is effected most easily by melting two to four pounds of the metal in a hemispherical iron ladle, allowing it to cool slowly until a crust is formed on the surface, then breaking this with a wire and pouring out quickly the still fluid metal from within. This yields, if not always large crystals, at least faces, from which project the corners of numberless cubes. Fine large crystals, with beautiful stair-like arrangement, can be obtained only by making the bismuth chemically pure, which is a tedious operation.

(30) P. H. V. asks whether one billion represents one thousand millions or one hundred millions; please put the figures the way they should be written to represent one billion. A. 1,000,000,000. French method correct for this country.

(31) C. M. D. writes: To-day when the wind was blowing pretty briskly, I felt, as I sat at my window in sixth story, a tingling sensation in my forehead, just above and between my eyes, such as would be caused by application of one of poles of an electric battery to that part. Can you account for it? Could there have been a current of electricity in the air? The wind was blowing from Western Union building and across hundreds of wires toward me. I have some curiosity to find out the cause of the sensation, which was not unpleasant, and which was not neuralgic or painful in the least. A. We think the sensation experienced by you could hardly have been produced by electricity. It was probably due to the cooling of the forehead by the rapid evaporation of perspiration; however this is a subject that will bear investigation.

**MINERALS, ETC.**—Specimens have been received from the following correspondents, and examined, with the results stated:

A. S. C.—It is a titaniferous iron ore; it cannot be smelted to advantage. —G. F. A.—The pyrrhotine is not nickeliferous and cannot be profitably worked for the small amount of gold which it carries. B. is not free milling—it contains too much galena, though not enough for smelting. It must be roasted. —H. W. McC.—Impure kaolin, or porcelain clay, if properly washed may be useful in the manufacture of cheap white ware, etc.—N. G. P. B.—They are tourmaline, muscovite in quartzite, and biotite. —W. M. H.—No. 1. Missing. No. 2 contains 80 per cent of lead. No. 3 is also rich in lead, carrying about 5 ounces of silver per ton. It may be smelted in the simple blast furnace; few smelters deal in their lead. It is sold as base bullion on assay. —J. E. B.—No. 1 is plumbago; if properly washed and purified, worth about 7 cents per lb. —B. F. J.—It is a bituminous shale; it will yield oil, gas, and tar upon distillation. No. 2 is a jaspery hematite. No. 3 is an impure limonite. No. 4 is a siliceous limestone, and if properly burned will doubtless yield a good hydraulic cement. —F. J. R.—No. 1 is chalcocite, a copper ore. No. 2, the gray part is fibrous zeolite. No. 3 is hornblende and quartz. No. 4, fibrous amphibole. No. 5 is leucopyrite or arsenic of iron. —A. S.—The vine sent is the climbing wild hemp (*Milvina scandens*), common in the middle Southern States. —J. E. T.—The box contains fragments of semi decomposed orthoclase and sandstone, serpentine rock and impure manganite, or ferromanganese. —J. M.—It is nodular iron pyrites, iron sulphide.

#### COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

On the Cause of Boiler Explosions. By A. J. P.  
On the Wheel Question. By J. K.  
On the Movement of Light in Space. By A. S.  
On Easily made Slide Valve. By F. O.  
On Diet. By T. B. McC.  
On the New Optical Delusion. By C. L., H. W. P.  
A. O., R. H. B.  
On Safety Appliance for Boilers. By P. C. F.  
On Optical Delusion. By G. A. S.  
On Diffusion. By S. R. S.

#### OFFICIAL

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FOR WHICH

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Granted in the Week Ending

July 15, 1879.

AND EACH BEARING THAT DATE.

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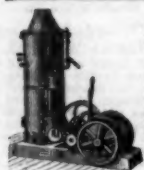
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